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EARLY
SOUTH INDIAN PALAEOGRAPHY

BY

T. V. MAHALINGAM, M.A., D. Litt.

Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology,
University of Madras

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

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T. V. MAHALINGAM

Early South Indian Palaeography

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FOREWORD

This book on early South Indian Palaeography written by Dr. T. V. Mahalingam, Professor of Ancient History and Archaeology in the University of Madras is a definite contribution to the study of original scripts in South India. The book presents in an interesting form the evolution of early Indian scripts more Particularly of the Tamil country. Strangely enough we owe the beginnings of the scientific study of Indian scripts to European authors, who by their knowledge of India linguistics and palaeography have contributed largely to the understanding of Indian Epigraphy and given an impetus to a study of this subject. In the few centuries before and after the Christian era the Brahmi script was extensively used in inscriptions on rocks, caves, earthenware and coins. Such inscriptions have been found in different places in India and it is only with their actual decipherment that a comparative study of the epigraphs and their languages has become possible. The script on the seals from Mohenjodaro and Harappa has been interpreted in different ways and the great savant Father Heras has sought to read old Tamil in the seals. We have now advanced very much from the days of pictography to the modern alphabets of different languages. I must congratulate Dr. Mahalingam on an exceedingly useful and scientifically accurate publication on Early South Indian Palaeography that he has brought out. He has placed all students of Palaeography under a debt of gratitude.

UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS,
21st November, 1967.

A. L. MUDALIAR,
Vice-Chancellor.

PREFACE

The history of the study of Indian Palaeography is nearly two centuries old, and its commencement synchronised with the foundation of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta by Sir William Jones in 1784. South Indian Palaeography, however, did not receive any attention till the days of Colonel Colin Mackenzie, the Surveyor-General of the British East India Company in South India during the first two decades of the last century and Babington (1828) who prepared a table of letters based on the Sanskrit and Tamil inscriptions at Māmallapuram. In 1833 Sir Walter Elliot prepared an elaborate table of the earlier forms of the Kannada alphabet, while four years later captain H. Harkness compiled his *Ancient and Modern Alphabets of the popular Hindu Languages of the Southern Peninsula of India.* But the first systematic work on South Indian Palaeography was done by A. C. Burnell who produced in 1874 a valuable book on the subject *Elements of South Indian Palaeography (from the 4th to the 14th century A.D.)*, being an introduction to the study of South Indian inscriptions and manuscripts. In 1896 John George Buhler brought out a monumental work on Indian Epigraphy called *Indische Palaeographie* which even now serves as a standard work on the subject. Originally written in German, it was translated into English in Volume XXXIII of the *Indian Antiquary* J. F. Fleet. He made a comparative study of the different forms which the scripts assumed with the progress of time and was able to "illustrate most of the Indian alphabets by cuttings from facsimiles, instead of hand-drawn signs." He has given in his work considerable space to the early South Indian scripts and pointed out some of the main differences between the North Indian and South Indian ones. G. H. Ojha's book in Hindi called *Bharatiya Pracīna Lipimala (the Palaeography of Ancient India)*, published in 1918, contains a short account of the evolution of the South Indian scripts also. Ahmad Hasan Dani's *Indian Palaeography* (1963) is the latest general book on the subject and deals with the Palaeography of South India also, D. C. Sircar's book, *Indian Epigraphy* (1964), which is a comprehensive treatment of the subject does not deal with

Palaeography which he has promised to bring out in a separate volume. Raj Bali Pandey's *Indian Palaeography* (1952) which is a general and useful book on the subject does not deal with South Indian Palaeography or Epigraphy.

In 1914 T. A. Gopinatha Rao discussed in the first Volume of the *Travancore Archaeological Series* the evolution of Palaeography in South India. Later T. N. Subramanyan brought out in Tamil a book (1931) on ancient Tamil scripts under the title *Paṇḍaittamiḻ Eḷuttukkaḷ*. C. Sivaramamurti examines in his book *Indian Palaeography and South Indian Scripts* (1954) the development of each letter with particular reference to its changing shapes. Kannaiyan's *South Indian Scripts* (1956) is a general work on the evolution of South Indian scripts.

So early as 1883 Burgess wrote: "As applied to Indian inscriptions, comparative palaeography has as yet made little progress towards scientific accuracy, and much has still to be done before we can use the characters of different inscriptions with full confidence as a safe guide to chronology." This observation is still true, though some work on the South Indian inscriptions and their palaeography has been done so far. For such study actual impressions and facsimiles of inscriptions are needed; and the publication of photo copies of some of the South Indian inscriptions in the volumes of the *Epigraphia Indica* and *South Indian Inscriptions* has helped to a great extent the study of the evolution of writing in South India.

There have been found so far some sixty label inscriptions in Brāhmī characters of the Drāviḍi type in the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tiruccirappalli, Coimbatore and North Arcot in the Madras state and Nellore in Andhra Pradesh. They constitute the basic material for a study of South Indian Palaeography in its earliest phases. The first attempt at a study of these inscriptions was made by Venkayya who thought that the natural caverns in which the few inscriptions known then were found were Buddhist and that the language of the inscriptions was Pali. It was between 1907 and 1918 that more inscriptions of the kind were discovered in different places in the southern districts of the Madras State by scholars like V. Venkayya, H. Krishna Sastri, K. V. Subramanya

Ayyar and Radhakrishna Ayyar. A number of these inscriptions were published by H. Krishna Sastri in the *Proceedings of the First Oriental Conference* (Poona 1919). But a more scientific and detailed study of the inscriptions was made by K. V. Subramanya Ayyar in the *Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference* (Madras, 1923). Krishna Sastri felt that the language of the records was "early Tamil." After these, a few more inscriptions were discovered and all of them were studied by C. Narayana Rao, who concluded that the language of the records was Paiśāci Prākṛt.

Casual studies of these inscriptions were made later by T. N. Subramanyan in his *Paṇḍai Tamiḻ Eḻuttukkaḷ* (1931) and *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*-Volume III, pt. II (1957), K. K. Pillay in *Tamil Culture* (1956), and Kamil Zvelabil in the *Archiv Orientalni* (1964). But no systematic attempt has been made so far to study all the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country from the point of view of their authors, language, grammar, palaeography and contents. The script of these inscriptions which differs from the Aśokan Brāhmi in some respects to serve the needs of the language in which the records were written formed the basis for the development of later South Indian scripts.

Since the main body of the book was printed Sri Iravatham Mahadevan, I. A. S., who has made an independent study of the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country, has made available his readings and interpretations of them. But I have not been able to consider them in the present Volume.

The figures given in the book have been taken from Mason's *A History of the Art of writing* and Diringer's *The Alphabet.*

I am under obligation to the Archaeological Survey of India for supplying me photographs of the Brāhmī inscriptions dealt with in this book and of which they have the copy right. Mr. T. N. Subrahmanyan gave me valuable suggestions and help in my study of the Brāhmī inscriptions for which I am very much beholden to him. Dr. N. Subrahmanyam, Reader in Indian History went through a few chapters in the manuscript and gave me some useful suggestions for which I am thankful

to him. I am indebted to Sri S. Gurumurthy, M.A., Research Assistant and Sri Y. Subbarayalu, M.A., Research Fellow in the Department for helping me in seeing the work through the Press. Sri Gurumurthy and Sri G. Ramamurthy, M.A., Technical Assistant in the Department, prepared the index for the book for which my thanks are due to them.

Dr. Sir A. L. Mudaliar, Vice-Chancellor of the University was good enough to contribute a foreword for the book for which I am very much beholden to him.

I am grateful to the Vice-Chancellor and Syndicate of the University of Madras for sanctioning the publication of the work as the first one in the Madras University Archaeological Series.

Department of Ancient History
and Archaeology
UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
10—7—1967

T. V. MAHALINGAM.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

SECTION I

Sign Language

Writing is one of the finest fruits of human endeavour; as well as speech it is the instrument of culture and civilization. "The invention of *printing* though ingenious, compared with the invention of *letters* is no great matter," observes Thomas Hobbes, the English philosopher, in the *Leviathan*.[1] Indeed the letters and numerals have played such a vital role in human history that with Lewis Morgan, the late Prof. Gordon Childe regards them as part of the technological revolution.[2] It is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that anthropologists, prehistorians and archaeologists have laboured hard for years to know and interpret the origin and development of writing. It is evident that through writing man has sought to get over the shortcomings of speech; and history bears testimony that he has largely succeeded in it. Writing, thus, is an extension of speech; and it arose out of severe social necessity. "In the more primitive life, as man advanced in the scale of civilization and tribal life became more complex, and as tribes came into contact with each other, enlarging their horizon of life and action, verbal speech proved inadequate as a means of communication."[3] With the newer phases of the broadening life, the dealings among men grew in number and complexity subjecting the memory to heavy strains and there was the need to record them.

Life had to be made smooth; for society to hold together matters among men had to be definite. With oral transactions and agreements depending primarily on memory and conscience for their fulfilment, there was no standard, concrete, universally agreed and readily verifiable evidence to be invoked whenever necessary.[4] There was then the need to preserve knowledge and pass on the traditional lore to posterity. But above all, laws had

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1. *Leviathan*, (Oxford Edn.) Ch. IV, 'of speech', p. 23.

2. *Social Evolution*, p. 23; also Kenneth Oakley, 'A Definition of man', *Science News*, No. 20, p. 75.

3. William A. Mason. *A History of Writing*, p. 20.

4. We are told for instance, that in Sumer, a Temple could dispose of vast estates, flocks and herds, huge revenues, and issue advances and loans. Writing became essential there to record these transactions as well as maintain accounts satisfactorily and in a manner understandable to all. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, p. 180).

to be codified or the ever present danger of social disintegration would stare us in the face. There can be no doubt that verbal means were unequal to meet the tough problems of an expanding social life. It is true that our ancestors had a strong memory, deep in its roots and colossal in its dimensions. Yet, there was limit to its load; for every man's memory has its own degrees and peculiarities of fading. Consider our own scriptures; great as our oral tradition is, the textual problems would have been much less refractory had writing been employed in India to a definite degree very early.

Memory is falliable; and communication needs both parties to be at the same time and place, unless messengers are employed. Surely no community with any signs of progress would submit to such limitations. Speech, therefore, requires a ghost to represent it and strangely enough a ghost which should not by any chance be ethereal. Given this situation writing is a corollary of social life. And it should be a surprise only if man had not developed it. But obviously writing as we have it now was not the invention of a single day nor of a single man. It has existed longer within the womb of society than out of it.[5] Years ago Sir Edward Tylor wrote: "the art of writing......was developed...... by a few steps of invention, which, if not easy to make, are at any rate easy to understand when made."[6] But those few steps have accelerated social life as fast as they required a long time to materialise; and as they are at least as easy to comprehend now, we happen to know a good deal of the history of writing.

The earliest form of writing was the pictograph. But we must examine how the pictographs themselves evolved, though we do not have the evidence of material records to help us. However, here anthropology should borrow from geology its classical principle of *uniformitarianism*. We can interpret events of the past by considering processes currently at work and accessible to our observation. Adopting this method it should be remembered that the evolution of writing is best studied together with the cognate process of speech. And it may be safely concluded that

5. "Still it may safely be claimed that the final chapter is practically completed and that the long historical development of written characters for ever is a closed book," Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

6. *Anthropology*, Vol.I (Watts 1946), p. 132.

the earliest 'languages' must have been a combination of gesture and onomatopoeia. Mason writes: "It is more than an idle metaphor to liken this sign-language to actual writing in the air with the hands......it was not so much the movements of the hands as the picture of the movements that prefigured in many cases the subsequent written signs of which they were prototypes".[7] In a profoundly instructive article Sir Richard Paget cites De Kempelen's finding that (a) the various sounds of speech are simply the ordinary results of the *positions of the articulating organs* and further concludes, what De Kempelen failed to realise, the (b) the organs of articulation were themselves influenced by pantomimic hand-signs. In the same article Sir Richard has summarised Dr. J. Rae's conclusions that (a) the primitive form of spoken 'word' would express simply the completed action, (b) the lips, tongue and mouth as a whole have resemblances to external objects and actions and (c) the primitive significant sounds were all monosyllables and expressed force, form and movement.[8]

In the *Pickwick Papers* Charles Dickens describes Sam Weller laboriously writing his valentine to Mary and at the same time *forming with his tongue imaginary characters to correspond.*[9] Later on the same concord of hand and mouth was observed by Charles Darwin; children learning to write move their tongues in

7. *op. cit.*, p. 20. "For instance, if an Indian desired to say that you were not truthful, he would touch his tongue with one finger and hold up two fingers towards you signifying that you were double-tongued, that is untruthful. If he wished to say that a given place was distant two, three or more days' journey, he would twirl the fingers of both hands one over the other like a wheel rolling, inclining his head as if asleep and hold up as many fingers as there were 'sleeps', meaning nights; thus indicating the number of days of travel necessary to reach the place in question. If he desired to refer to the past, he would extend the hand in front with the index finger pointed, drawing his arm back with a screw motion, meaning a long time back. If he intended to refer to the future, he would put his hand with the index finger at his back pushing it forward with a screw motion, thus indicating a distant time in the future." J. Lee Humfreville, *Twenty Years Among Our Hostile Indians*, quoted by Mason, in his book, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

8. 'The Origin of Language', *Science News*, No. 20. "It will be noted that Dr. Rae assumed that the human mouths pantomimed, as it were on its own account and not as understudy to the human hands. He was evidently unaware of the Sam Weller effect" (p. 86).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

a ridiculous fashion and persons cutting with scissors often move their jaws in unison with their hands.[10] Here is "direct evidence to explain how in the beginning, primitive man's attempts to explain himself, by natural hand pantomime must have resulted in *unconscious* mouth movements accompanying the hand pantomime.[11] This evidence is confirmed by the "natural pantomimic language of the uneducated born-deaf" and "anthropologically speaking, the uneducated born-deaf are living fossils indicating the mental condition of early man before the discovery of verbal symbolism."[12]

After all speech is but one form of expression and there are many things spontaneously expressed by gestures to this day.[13] And even speech is usually accompanied by gesticulation. Among many tribes inter-tribal communication is carried on only by means of gestures. The earliest pieces of writing, the pictographs, as we have seen, are only recorded gestures. It is, therefore,

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10. *Science News*, No. 20, p. 84.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 85. "And if these unconscious mouth movements were themselves accompanied by emotional sounds, expressing the pantomimist's anxiety to be noticed and understood, then speech like sound would inevitably result." See *Ibid.*, p. 90 for Paget's account as to how in the English language, the tongue deals with actions in which *both* hands are normally involved.

T. H. Huxley wrote: "Although the tongue is credited with the responsibility of speech as the 'unruly member' and undoubtedly takes a very important share in its production, it is not absolutely indispensable." (*Elementary Physiology*, p. 338.) (Macmillan, 1929). Attention is drawn to the actual instance cited in the book of a man whose "conversation was perfectly intelligible" after his "tongue had been removed as completely as a skilful surgeon could perform the operation."

In such a case pronunciation of some letters may not be clear. A similar handicap (though to a lesser extent) will be exprienced by a person who has lost his teeth and yet the "speech function" of teeth is generally not quite well appreciated.

12. *Science News*, 20, pp. 87 and 91.

13. In Dr. Starling's *Principles of Human Psychology* (p. 357), expressive gestures have been anatomically classified into facial, manual, corporal and pedal.

The tongue 'plays its part in the language of gesture such as biting the tongue in uncertainty or anguish, licking the lips in anticiption and protruding it in rudeness' (R. J. Harrison, *Man the Peculiar Animal*, p. 80).

certain that speech and writing had common, though not necessarily coeval origin in imitative gestures.[14] They must then, be integrally viewed and interpreted; and physiologically too there is some basis for this approach in that speaking and writing are but two forms of *one* process.[14a] It is probable that in the frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex is an *area for writing*. This must be intact for one to remember how to make the highly co-ordinated movements involved in writing language and in drawing.[15] Nevertheless to some extent speech and writing entail cortical and subcortical dynamics in their entirety.[16] As against a too rigid assignment of exclusive functions to the different regions of the cortex, Dr. Marie stresses that speech functions must be considered as a whole, "both for spoken and written speech."[17] Pavlov regarded speech as the external manifestation of the second signalling system; speech, according to him was the 'signal of signals."[18] Writing too, then, would come under the second signalling system.[19]

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14. Speech must have been collaterally influenced by onomatopaeia, but that too is one kind of imitation.

14a. "In the past insufficient emphasis has been laid on the fact that stuttering and writer's cramp belong to the same group of disabilities. Writing and speaking are motor forms of expression in language. Writer's cramp and stuttering are muscular spasms which interrupt the normal flow of writing and speaking.........Exactly the same kind of treatment is required in both........." (L. S. P. Davidson and Col. D. M. Dunlop and J. M. McNee—*Text Book of Medical Treatment*, (V Edn. 1950), pp. 887.88.)

15. Clifford T. Morgan, *Introduction to Psychology*, (McGraw Hill, 1956).

16. "The power of speech, which belongs only to man, is a result of the brain. The fact that a child commences to speak *only after it has learned to handle objects* and to walk, is an indication of the complexity of this function". (Henry Dryere, *Aids to Psychology* (4th Edn.), Bailiere Tindall & Cox, London, 1957 p. 212.), *Italics mine*.

17. Samson Wright, *Applied Physiology*, (1956) p. 674. By "speech function" Dr. Marie seems to imply speaking and reading only. But if these two are part of the same process, and to read what is *written* is a 'speech function' writing itself should not be in any way different.

18. *Selected Works*, (Moscow, 1955), p. 262.

19. Best and Taylor observe: "As a child which is taught to read auditory speech is associated with visual symbols of speech, and finally through an association between these, and the motor area for the hand, the child learns to express his auditory and visual impressions by the written word". (*Physiological Basis of Medical Practice*, 1940).

Anybody who investigates intensively the physiology of writing[20] and determines the precise role of the brain and the central nervous system would be rendering a great service. Incidentally that would give us a clearer understanding of the evolution of writing also. For, while the stimulus of social environment is undeniable, nevertheless there may have been another complementary factor; perhaps man has an "inborn propensity for graphic expression." And it is no flight of the imagination to think that this potential instinct to write or draw is man's biological inheritance which he shares with the members of the *pongidae*.[21] Dr. Julian Huxley once observed a young gorilla in the zoo trace the outline of his shadow on the wall with his finger.[22] Leonard Bowen happened to see rhesus monkeys trace the outline of their hands in the dust using a twig held like a pencil.[23]

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20. John Gray McKendrick's remarks deserve reproduction here: "Nature knows nothing of letters and syllables; words are simple phones or combinations of phones, and each phone is formed of vibrations. This is nature's longhand method of recording speech: written or printed letters are a species of short hand invented by man" (*Principles of Physiology*, Williams and Nargate, London).

21. Paget writes: "It is interesting to note that the dawning as it were, of hand and mouth sympathy is to be seen in the chimpanzees; but with this difference, that the sympathy appears to be limited to hand with lips and jaw, and not to hand and tongue" (*Science News*, No. 20, p. 85.)

Kenneth Oakley writes: "It is sometimes assumed that the difference in mental capacity between apes and man is accurately reflected in their brain-sizes. Unfortunately the facts do not justify the use of this simple criterion because mental capacity depends rather more on the quality of the cortical association areas of the brain than on its size. It is true that the comparative psychology of primates shows that the rating of mental capacity is broadly parallelled by the order of magnitude of the brain. The recorded range of adult brain-size in normal man is from 830 cc. to 2,100 cc., whereas the brains of gorillas range from 340 to 685 cc. But as Dr. E.I. White has lately pointed out to me a child of our own species is usually beginning to talk at the age of two years; yet at that age a brain capacity of 650 cc. is probably well within the proper range. Thus one cannot assume that an adult *Australopithecus* with a brain of that size was incapable of speech. In any case Dr. Broom's latest discoveries in South Africa suggest that some austrolopithecines may have had brains approaching 850 cc." ('A Definition of Man', *Science News*, No. 20.)

22. Cited in Somia Cole, *Pre-history of East Africa*, p. 250. *fn.*

23. *Ibid.*

Now to the different stages in the evolution of the alphabet. The rationale behind writing has been examined earlier. Speech is perishable and yet when translated into writing it gains permanance defying the corroding hand of time. But space, how to conquer that? How to communicate over a wide area in a short time? Herein comes the 'tom-tom.' One may wonder whether clapping of hands was its fore-runner. Writing is the result of evolving visual symbols, to correspond to conventional auditory symbols; in tom-tom, on the contrary, a secondary system of auditory symbols is built up to be equivalent to the primary system *i.e.* speech. And the hand, instead of the letters or figures of writing, produces sounds. One should not, however, imagine, that the use of the voice had no place in tom-tom. In the initial stages, before the development of drums and wind-pipes, the human "cry"[24] must have been an important means of communication. Even now in upper India the "Coo–ee" is an oft-used method of transmitting news from village to village.[25] The acoustic method of communication is generally used by any community living in a compact area, while the optical method obtains among tribes living in the vast open spaces.[26] To this day, the acoustic means are common even among advanced people: the temple-bell, the town-crier, the bugle-call are a few instances.[26a] But with the primitive people tom-tom is highly developed, requiring good skill, and a great variety of subtle and intricate things can be dexterously conveyed. Their system of telecommunication too has multitudes of local 'stations,' and messages would be transmitted, picked up and relayed by one another. The drum is

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24. "Language does not function by the spoken word alone, but may assume all forms of expression, which the physical structure of the organs of speech allow." (Julius E. Lips, *The Origin of Things*, p. 218.)

25. "Standing on a commanding point, may be a big rock or the roof of a house, a man coo.ees to attract the attention of the people in a high pitch voice. From village to village the message is tossed and is broadcast throughout large areas in an incredibly short space of time" (Jim Corbett, *Man Eaters of Kumaon*, (Oxford, 1947, p. 34.)

26. Julius E. Lips, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

26a. It is said that Tirumalai Nāyaka of Madura (1623-'59) got within a short while information in this way of the midday worship in the temple at S'rīvilliputtūr about fifty miles away and it was only after he heard the news that he took his food.

the most important instrument used and the drummers perch themselves on tall trees, to command a good view over a wide range; or they may call each other from hill-top to hill-top with intermediate stations relaying the news. With this system in operation nothing can escape the notice of the tribe; the movement of anything, an animal to be hunted, or an enemy sneaking deftly, or a stranger wandering aimlessly is observed with remarkable agility and the news transmitted in the tribe's own "Morse Code." In a trice the incorrigible jungle reverberates with gyrating drumbeats and the tribesmen are rushed to the trouble spot with the necessary equipment for immediate action.

But tom-tom is a by-lane in the evolution of writing; and there were others too. One stage of writing is marked by the use of totem-signs by primitive peoples; this was definitely an effective system of record which could solve problems of personal identification and constituted really "a primitive genealogy."[27] Of all primitive attempts the nearest approach to writing is made by the use of totems as autographs. A similar "but somewhat adventitious" influence in the evolution of writing was the use of private ownership marks.[28] Apart from identification, the vital problem in all early recording was the need for memory jogs; it has been indicated earlier that even pictographs had essentially a muemonic origin. There are varieties of these ingenious muemonic devices, though perhaps the knotted cord is the most common. The Peruvian *quipus* (*quipos, kipus*) usually consisted of various threads or cords differing in length, thickness and colour, hanging from a top band or cross-bar. (See Fig. 1). Though mainly intended for purposes of enumeration, there are instances of

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27. A totem is a character, generally pictorial, employed by savage peoples to indicate the clan, gens or family to which an individual belongs. "The custom is almost universal among savage tribes to select the form of some animal, fish or bird, as a totem to distinguish between the different clans and families. These totems are tattooed on the body in brilliant colours or painted upon the possessions of the family clan." (Julius E. Lips, *op. cit.*, p. 23.)

28. The most interesting symbol for private ownership is the Babylonian figure of an arrow or spear with four crossed lines cut on the shaft ——> (Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 255) which meant first possession and then name (proper), 'a reminiscent picture of a most archaic custom.'

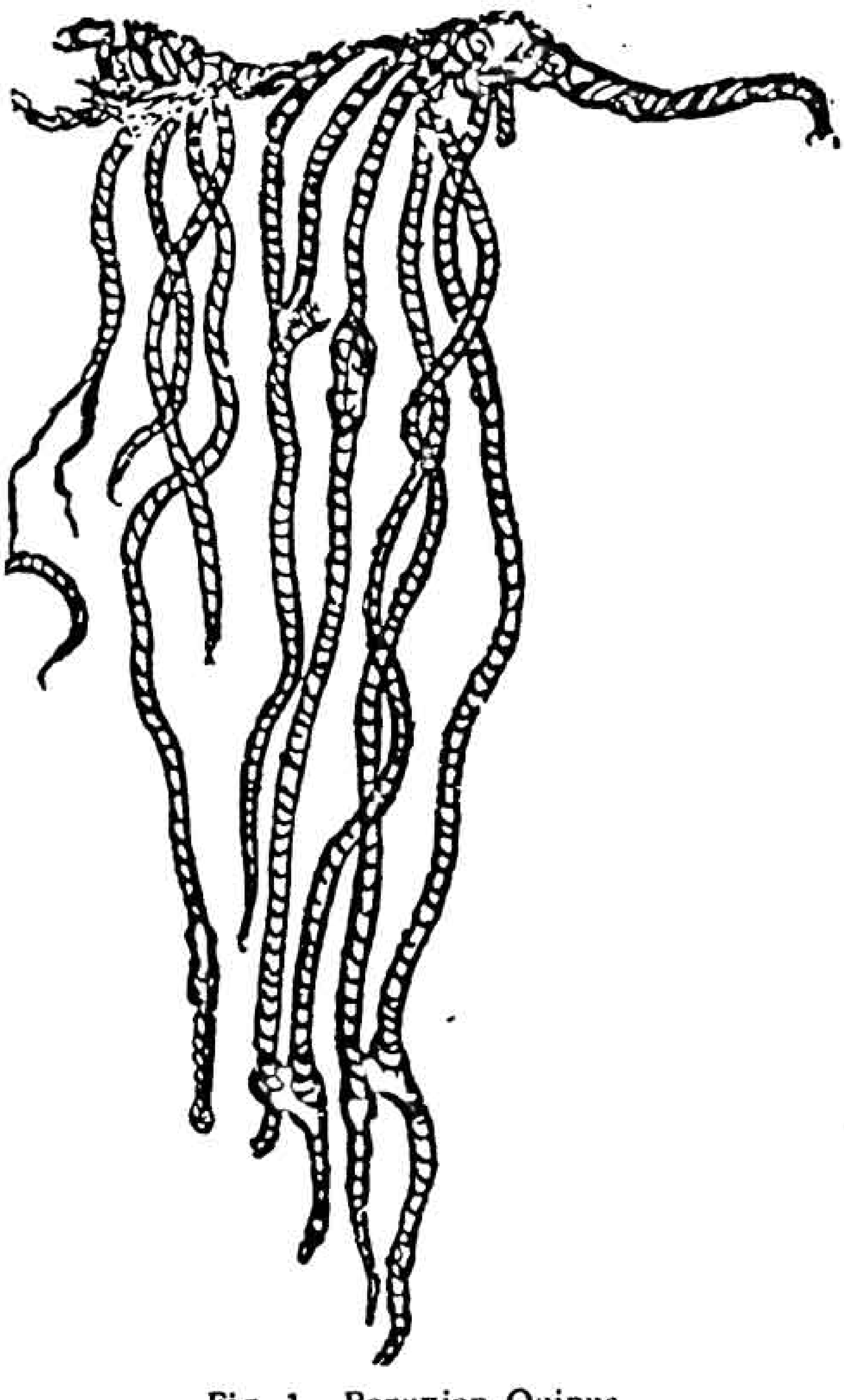

Fig. 1. Peruvian Quipus

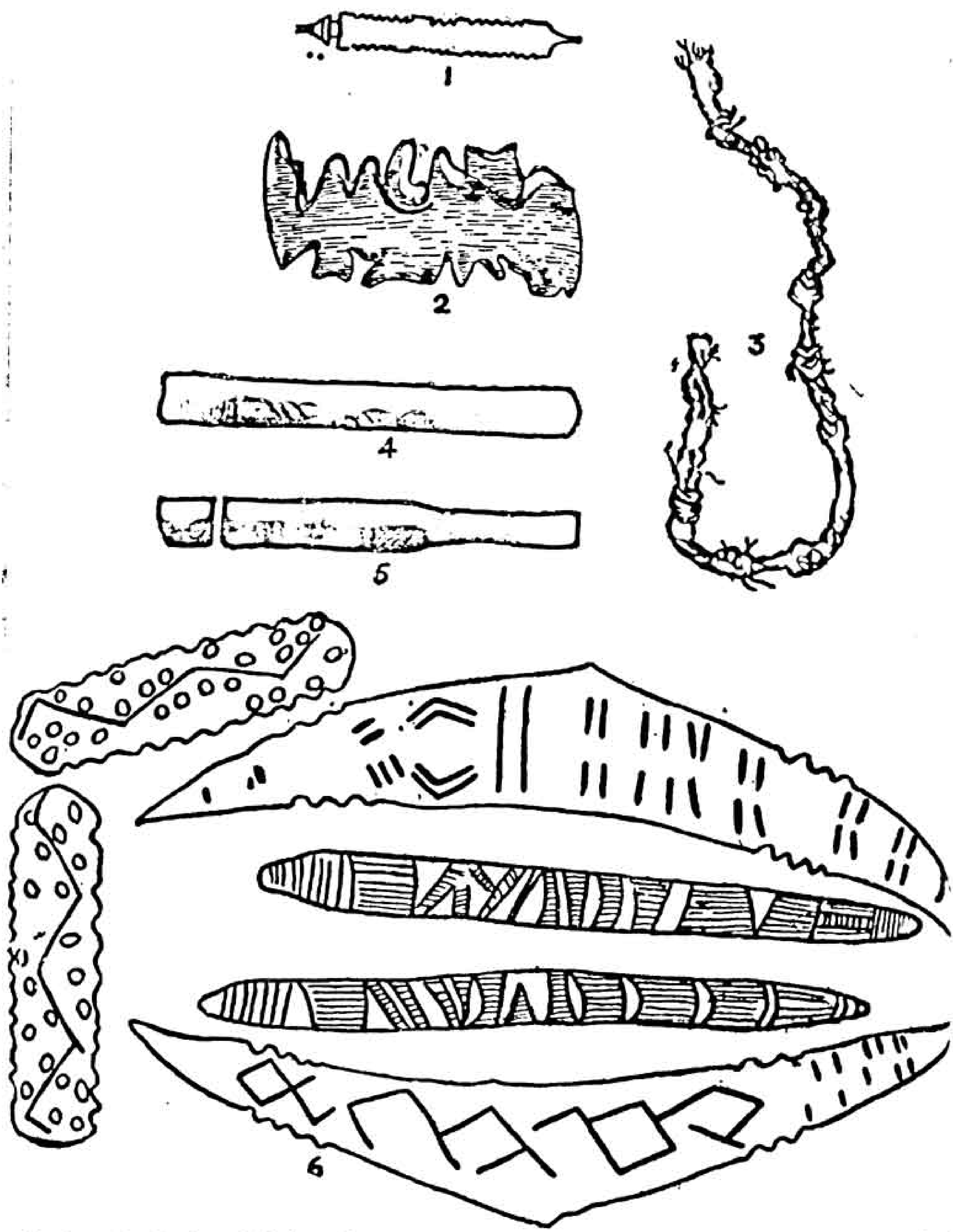

Fig 2. 1. Notched Stick from Laos (Indo-China). 2. "Geographical Map" from Greenlan 3. Makonde knot-record (Tanganyika Territory) 4-5. Notched sticks from Nort America, 6. Australian Notched sticks.

historical events or edicts being conveyed through these means.[29] Some tribes used notched sticks, others shells and beads as aids to memory, "much the same as the modern rosary or abacus". A staggering instance of muemonic record was the "revenue book" of Hawaii, "which consisted of a rope four hundred fathoms long, divided into sections, corresponding to the various districts of the country. Each section of the rope was the complete record of the tax collector, who by means of loops, knots and tufts of different shapes and colours kept a correct account of the personal property of the people."[30] In the middle ages when learning was confined to the priests and to a lesser extent to the courtiers, in some parts of England, people in the rural areas, remote from the churches, employed notched sticks called 'clogs' or 'almanacs' to remember holy days.[31] (See Fig. 2). The North American Indians employed some unique devices such as the *Wampum* and the *Calumet* or the reed "peace-pipe". In the *Wampum* we have a close approach to picture-writing. It was a broad belt made of shell or beads set in patterns portraying objectively or by metaphor or in a quite conventional manner the matter to be recorded. (See Figs. 3, 4 and 5). The patterns were meant to be "memory jogs" so that in a way the *Wampum* served as a muemonic pictograph; and as it was commonly employed, a man with a sound memory would be appointed to keep such records. Once a year they were to be produced before the entire tribe and

29. Some other ancient peoples (in China and Tibet) and some primitive tribes of the present day, such as the Li of Hainan, the Santals of Bengal, some tribes of the Japanese Riukiu islands, the Polynesian islands of Central and Western Africa, California and Southern Peru, have also employed knotted cords and similar muemonic devices. In the Solomon Islands, in the Carolines, in the Pelew and the Marquesan islands, strings with knots and loops are still used for the exchange of news. (Diringer, *The Alphabet*, p.26.)

Marco Polo wrote of the inhabitants of the Zardandan-Yunnan, China: "They have no letters, but make their contracts and obligations by tallies of wood, one-half whereof one keepeth, and the other which being afterwards paid, the tally is destroyed." (See Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 31.)

30. "The weak point in the system was that each division collector had to "go along" with the record to explain and interpret it!" (*Ibid*, p. 35.)

31. "They were square blocks of wood notched on the four edges with the days of the week, the seventh notch being a long one. On one side of each edge, which included three months, lines from the notches bore dots or geometric marks indicating cycles of the moon. On the adjacent side, lines drawn from notches corresponding to church festivals, fasts and saints' days, bore characters symbolical of these holy days". (*Ibid.*, p. 36)

the precise import of each was to be publicly narrated. Yet despite all this elaborate precaution, misinterpretations, consequent conflicts and wars were too common to let this system have any lasting value.[32]

SECTION II

Pictographs

We have so far, attempted a brief survey of the nascent attempts of primitive men to get over the difficulties of speech so that communication could be less perishable. But all these varied devices invented by them have been rightly grouped under 'embryo-writing' to be distinguished from true writing. Obviously therefore, our main concern should be the study of the latter; and to begin with, that is, pictography. In a way pictography is the boundary between writing and art, so that to view it in a wider perspective we should consider some of the theories put forward by historians of art. Many scholars tend to believe that the theory of sympathetic magic has largely explained the purpose of all primitive art. Yet, what was at the back of the minds of these artists would seem to defy mangling by preconceived theories. In her book *Paintings and Engravings*, (Tr. by Eleanore Frances Armstrong)[33], Mille Annate Laming-Las Caux "has thought out along her own lines the reasons which may have prompted cave artists to acquire and develop their skill in order to be able to devote their time to decorating almost inaccessible areas of rock space. She joins issue, indeed, with Abbe Breuil, for she is not prepared to accept hunting, ritual and the practice of sympathetic magic as being sufficient explanations either of the choice or the number of the animals represented, or of the surfaces chosen for decoration, or of the seemingly casual

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32. Worn sometimes as an ornament or girdle, it was also used as money. (Diringer, *op. cit.* p. 28.)

33. "The ideas of writing and drawing were identical in prehistoric Egypt and in early Greece, as it is shown by the Egyptian word *s.sh* and by Greek *graphein*, which mean both 'writing' and 'drawing'". (Diringer, *ibid.*, p. 25).

"As far as history reaches, in every direction, the beginnings of writing seem to have been laid in pictorial art". (W.A.Mason, *op.cit.*, p.40.)

The remarkable drawing and paintings of cave men of central Europe who lived at the close of the last glacial period in Europe) which abound in artistic excellence, are frankly regarded as picture.writing by Dr. Arthur J. Evans who interprets them as records of events.

Fig. 3. The penn Treaty Belt. Given by the Indians to William Penn

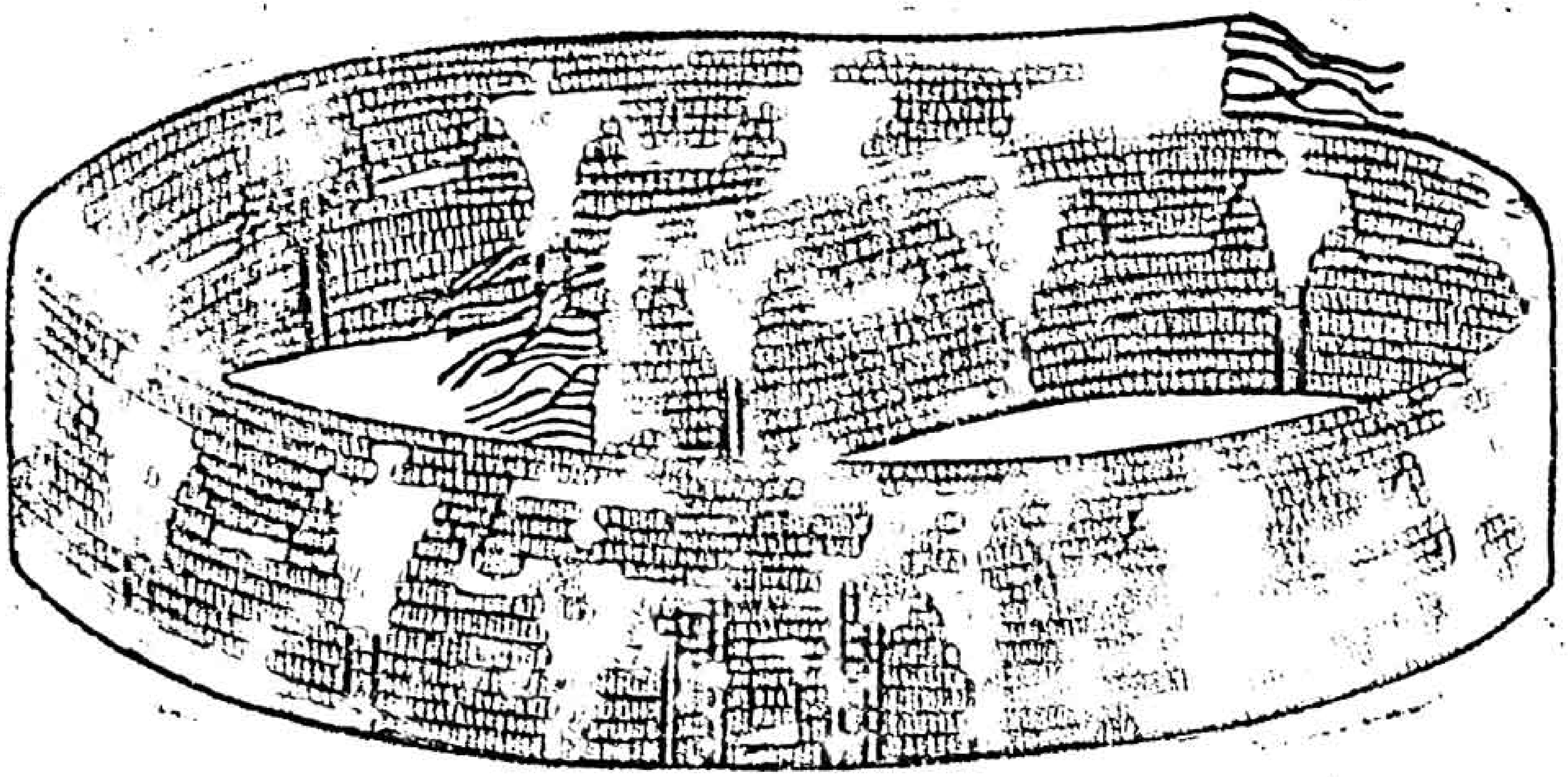

Fig. 4. Wampum belt belonging to the Onondaga Indians.

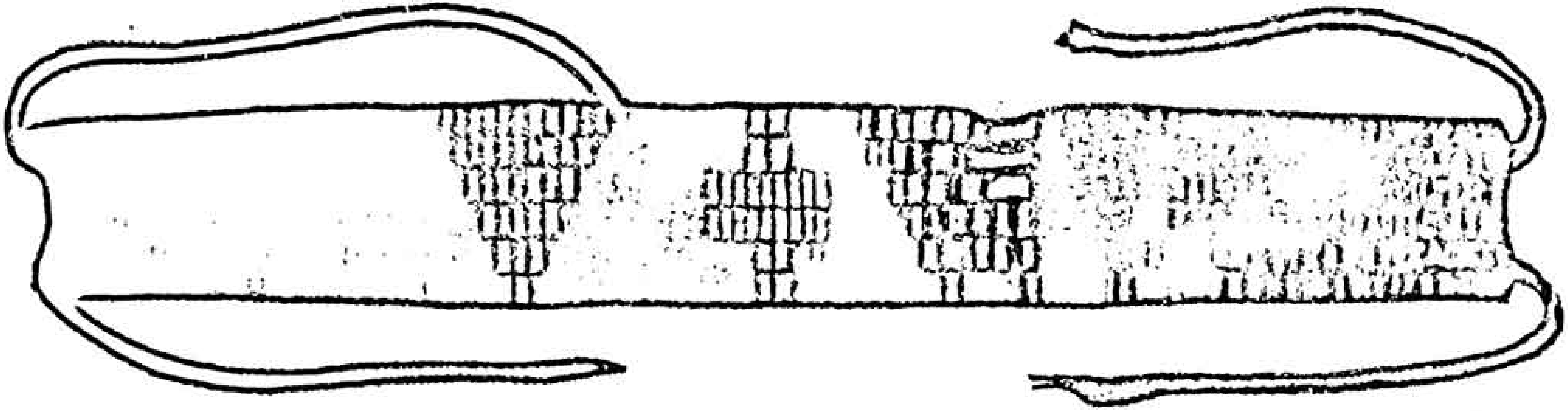

Fig. 5. Wampum Missionary belt.

superimposed drawings. Mille Laming draws attention to what she considers intelligibly obvious group compositions and argues that such groups are incompatible with the theory of sympathetic magic which depends on the supposition that each animal or figure was painted separately according to the needs of the hunt. More over, she rules out the alternative theory of these cave paintings being products of an anecdotal animal art on grounds of unnatural animal associations between certain animals within these groups.........".[34] It is therefore idle to conclude that these drawings and paintings represent one definite trend to the exclusion of all others or that all primitive art, irrespective of the factors of time and place, could be explained in terms of any single theory, however cogent it may seem to be. There is, indeed, no logical or historical necessity for any exclusive motive. Thus it is not improbable that primitive art has been permeated by many complementary factors. It may commemorate actual events or record instructions and directives to be carried out and essay as well dreamy visions of unfulfilled yearnings.

"However, picture-writing even in its elementary stage is more than a picture. It differs from picturing, which is the beginning of pure pictorial representation or art, from the fact that it is the utilitarian beginning of written language, aiming to convey to the mind not the pure representation of an event, but a narrative of the event, each notion, or idea being expressed by a little picture or sketch, which we term *pictograph.* The distinction is important, for the change from embryo-writing to picture writing implies an immense progress in the art of perpetuating or transmitting thought".[35] The change must have come about very early considering the pace of development from the Aurignasian cave drawings (of 20,000 to 30,000 years ago) which clearly show that people had acquired the mental trick of isolating the element of shape, and later those of colour, number etc. from their general impressions of animals.[36]

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34. See *The Times Literary Supplement*, May. 29, 1959, p. 316.

See also review of the same book in *The Listener*, May, 7, 1959, p. 812.

35. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

36. R. A. S. Paget, 'The Origin of Language' in *Science News*, No. 20, p. 91.

But it is doubtful whether in the evolution of writing we can distinguish between two distinct phases as the aesthetic and the utilitarian, for they seem to be inextricably fused together. Gordon Childe particularly stresses that the fact of the priestly origination of writing far from disproving the utilitarian theory only confirms it further for "the Sumerian priests invented writing not in their capacity of ministers of superstition but in that of administrators of a wordly estate. They, like Egyptian and Minoan scribes, used the invention not for magical or liturgical purposes but for practical business and administration".[37] While this is true, it does not take into cognizance the possibility of the prior existence of *pictures,* as such,[38] whose *raison d'etre* may not have been narration of events, and yet may have inspired the subsequent utilitarian picture writing. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, the birth of writing may not be wholly attributable to practical needs, though such needs may have been the immediate forces engendering it. There is at least one strong ground for this belief: the evolution of writing shows an unmistakable direction viz., *from the decorative to the plain*, and throughout, the more thoroughly utilitarian writing is meant to be, the plainer it becomes.[39] When all evidence definitely establishes this uniform course in the development of writing, it should not be futile to study this evolution in the reverse and infer an original stage of pictures as such, pure and simple, the main concern behind which may not have been plain practical communication. If this stage can be considered a historical fact, then, writing has had an aesthetic and not an utilitarian origin.[39a]

The subsequent development of writing presents no great difficulty; according to A. C. Haddon,[40] the stages through which alphabet writing has passed are:

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37. *Man Makes Himself*, p. 185. "It is no accident that the oldest written documents of the world are accounts and dictionaries. They disclose the severely practical needs that prompted the invention of Sumerian Script". (*Ibid.*, p. 184).

38. See, *ante*, p. 11 for the quotation from Diringer.

39. Haddon, *Evolution in Art*, p. 215.

39a. We have incidentally emphasised it here so that advocates of utilitarianism supported by substantial *but later* evidence may not wholly miss it.

40. *Evolution in Art*, pp. 216-7

(a) *Pictographs*–Pictures or actual representation of objects.

(b) *Ideograms*–Pictorial symbols[41] which are used to suggest objects or abstract ideas.

Phonograms–Graphic symbols[42] of sounds. They have usually arisen out of conventionalised ideograms, which have been taken to represent sounds instead of things.[43]

(c) Verbal signs, representing entire words.

(d) Syllabic signs which stand for articulation of which words are composed.

(e) Alphabetic signs or letters, which represent the elementary sounds into which the syllable can be resolved.

Since pictography is the most natural and direct means of written communication it must have originated independently among different peoples and thus, as Haddon observes, there is no single system of pictography.[44] "In the vast majority of cases a native interpreter is required to explain the exact significance of the figures, or of the events which they commemorate. Once explained, the representations are found to be sufficiently appropriate."[45]

Quite often, particularly in the earliest days of pictography, "the pictures simply recalled the objects to the mind ; the special and particular meaning of the record had to be devised through a process of mental equation."[46] Even later a good number of signs, occurring, as for instance, along with hieroglyphic words, graphically picture human or animal forms or their parts. Thus,

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41. *Ibid.*, p. 212. "Symbols are less obvious and more artificial than signs, they are usually conventional, and are not only abstract, but metaphysical, and often need explanation from history, religion and customs. They do not depict but suggest objects : do not speak directly through the eye to the intelligence, but presuppose in the mind knowledge of an event or fact which the sign calls. The symbols of the ark, dove, olive-branch and rainbow would be the cross and the crescent to those ignorant of history." (quoted from Garrick Mallery, 'Sign Language among North American Indians,' *First American Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, 1879-80 (1881).

42. See preceding footnote.

43. See *Supra fn.* 80 from the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, (quotation).

44. *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

45. *Ibid.*

46. T. N. Subrahmanyan, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, pt. ii, p. 1570.

beside the word spelt fully with the proper phonetic hieroglyphs there is a pictorial index sign "more fully to define its meaning."[47] Thus while in simple pictography, any figure stands for the object it represents, and its real meaning may be easily guessed, in complex representations, as they go beyond mere imitation there is great difficulty to discriminate their true import. A good knowledge of the signs, symbols and determinatives used is necessary for any correct interpretation.[48] E. B. Tylor illustrates this problem well:—" When the tortoise is put to represent land, it is no longer a mere imitation but has become an emblem or symbol. And where the bird is drawn to mean not a real king-fisher, but a man of that name, we see the first step toward phonetic writing or sound writing, the principle of which is to make a picture stand for the sound of a spoken word. How man may have made the next move toward writing may be learnt from the common child's game of *rebus*, that is writing words 'by things.' Like many other games, this one keeps up in child's sport what in earlier ages was man's earnest. Thus if one writes the word "waterman" by a picture of a water-jug and a man, this is drawing the meaning of the word in a way hardly beyond the American Indian's picture of the king-fisher. But it is very different when in a child's book of puzzles one finds the drawing of a water-can, a man being shot, and a date-fruit, this representing in *rebus* the word 'can-di-date.' For now what the pictures have come to stand for is no longer their meaning, but their mere sound. This is true phonetic writing, though of a rude kind, and shows how the practical art of writing really came to be invented."[49]

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47. For instance: 'to dance' by a girl dancing; 'to rest' by a recumbent figure; 'to ascend' by a person walking upstairs; 'judgement' by an eye; 'wonder' by a man with his hands upstretched. (See Mason, *op. cit.*, p.22).

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 215—16. "In attempting to decipher pictographs not only is it necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the people who made them, but it must be borne in mind that characters substantially the same, or 'homomorphs' (to use Colonel Mallery's term) made by one set of people have, a different signification among others. Further, differing forms ('symmorphs') for the same general conception or idea may occur. It is usually comparatively easy for any one to get a meaning out of a pictograph, but it is quite a different matter whether that was the meanidg which the inscriber intended to convey."

49. *Anthropology*, Vol. I, pp. 133-34.

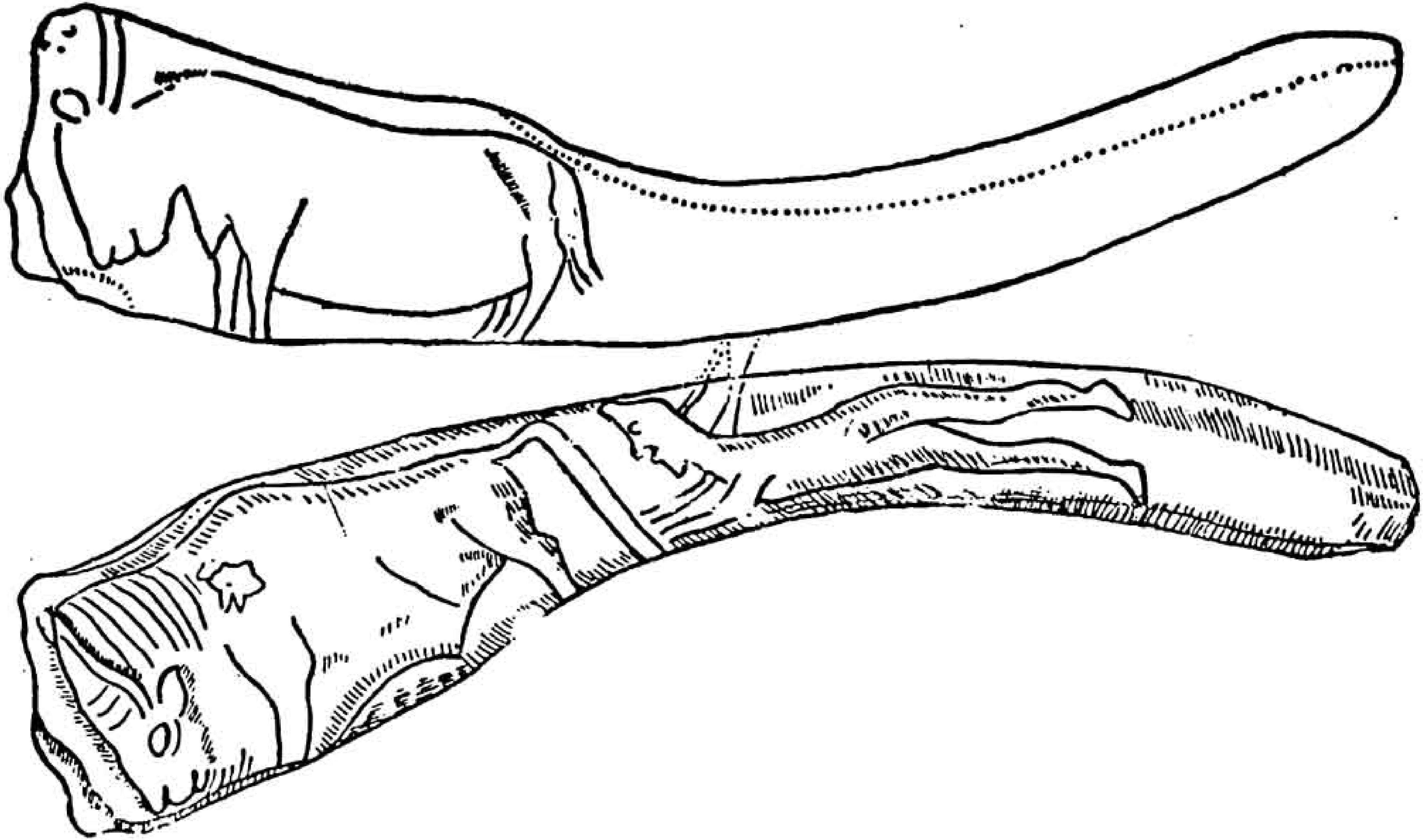

Fig. 6. Bison and Man. Hunting scene. Obverse and reverse. From Laugerie Basse, Dordogne, France.

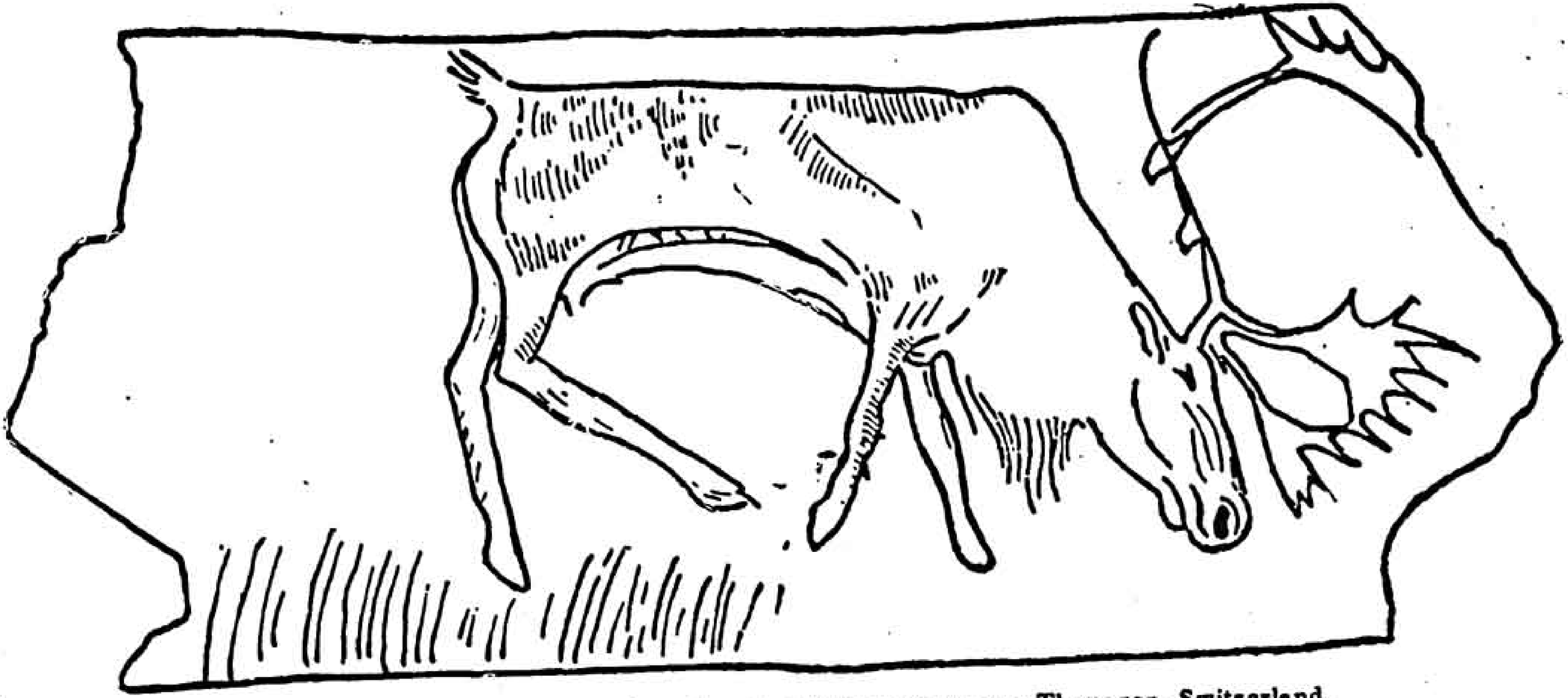

Fig. 7. Reindeer carved on a piece of antler. From a cave near Thayngon, Switzerland.

Amidst the best instances of pictograph are the drawings and paintings of the palaeolithic cave drockers of Central Europe. "Contemporaneous with Arctic and Semi Arctic animals long since extinct" they could still have such artistic excellence that nothing can compare with "the rare fidelity to nature of the drawings to which these rude men cut with flints or painted with coloured earths or vegetable dyes upon the rocky walls of their caves, or carved upon their crude stone implements or with better skill etched with delightful naivette upon the bones of now extinct animals, ages before metals were used or ever known."[50] Their numerous drawings portray the mammoth (see Fig. 6), bison, ox, reindeer, hyena, cave bear and the horse, "which with its erect mane and zebra-like characteristics gives further evidence, were it needed, of the vast prehistoric antiquity of their art."[51] The incomparable drawing of the reindeer, reproduced here, is carving on a piece of reindeer antler found in a cave near Thayngen, Switzerland. (See Fig. 7). All these drawings are "replete with realism and for spirit and dash are well nigh unexcelled."[52] Dr. Arthur J. Evans straightaway calls them picture-writing looking upon them as records of events, primarily of the chase, their principal occupation.[53]

At Lascaux, the cave paintings of the Aurignacian period show principally a giant aurochs; the entire animal is painted in "admirably vigorous strokes, but the head is the greatest master-piece." There are a number of horses, with prominent manes and short legs, similar to those of other caves. One scene depicts a wild mare and foal hunted by bowmen, a scene full of life and movement.[54]

There are naturalistic representations by palaeolithic men, in Eastern Spain, giving us a good idea of their way of life with its principal occupation of hunting. "A large number of their pictures are full of excitement and animation." The fighting scene from Galeria del Roble as well as the galloping horse shows, as Leouhard Adams says, "one characteristic feature of Stone

50. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*, cited on p. 43.

54. Leouhard Adams, *Primitive Art*, p. 79.

Age Painting at its highest development: concentration on what is absolutely essential and omission of all unnecessary detail."[55] And as he believes the original purpose of this and other similar pictures may not have been aesthetic, but rather pictographic.[56]

Many of the drawings in the Atlas Mountains may well belong to a period earlier than the Neolithic, as is shown, for instance, by the figures of the giant buffalo (*Bubalus antiqus*) which by then, it is believed, had become extinct. Adams holds that the drawings of elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes and ostriches, which are no longer in the northern areas, must belong to the time when there was a considerably warmer climate in the Atlas region.[57] In central Sahara paintings happen to be more common. "The style is naturalistic, animated" and "of particular interest are several polychrome paintings in the Tasili mountains representing graceful human figures dappled cattle close by."[58] The French Ahaggar expedition discovered in 1935 another site to the South-West of this region "with the same kind of polychrome wall paintings, showing various animals, but chiefly cattle. A few human figures are distinguished by extraordinarily animated and often graceful movements."[59]

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55. Leouhard Adams, *op. cit*, pp. 79—80. He observes earlier: "I think it will be generally agreed that we are completely unconscious of the lack of perspective. Is there indeed a lack of perspective at all? Does it not appear as if the artist had looked down from a high rock on this handful of men attacking each other from bows and arrows? And in that case would not the representation meet even our demands in the matter of perspective." p.79

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 80—81.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 85. Count de Chasoeloup recognises a striking similarity between Ahaggar paintings on one hand and Bushman art and the art of Ancient Egypt on the other and suggests the Ahaggar plateau as the original home of this art. Commenting on this Leouhard Adams observes: "We can trace the development of Egyptian paintings in Egypt itself from very primitive beginnings. As far as we know strong influences have spread in exactly the opposite direction-that is from Egypt to the West and South-west, but even this took place in the dynastic period, and not in pre-historic times. In the Atlas region the engraved figures of bulls and rams with sun discs between their horns show an obvious influence, but they are not older than the New Stone Age, and may be even more recent. The paintings of Ahaggar plateau, then, appear to be only a link-though probably the most beautiful one-in the chain of Saharan art centres parallel in age to pre-dynastic and dynastic Egypt." *Ibid.*, p. 85.

The paintings of the Bushmen of South Africa depict hunting scenes in which elephants, long haired bovines, lions, antelopes and other wild animals are found. One fine instance of Bushman painting shows a herd of ostriches of different colours. "A close inspection, however, reveals that one of the birds has 'human' legs, and peeping out from among the feathers a bow and arrow can be seen." This 'bird' is a bushman, out on a hunt, and to be able to get to the proximity of the birds, has disguised himself, putting on an ostrich skin. When George W. Stow showed a copy of this picture to a modern bushman he could readily explain: "Ostriches, three black males two blue females. The 'Nusy Bushmen' not the 'Kham Bushmen are said to hunt in Ostrich skins."[60] The Bushman paintings show attempts at perspective through fore-shortening, though some exhibit difficulties therein; they further depict the profile, the front view and, above all, the back view. One of the finer specimens shows both the animals, and the hunters are drawn with appreciable care for form and perspective.[61]

We have no doubt that these drawings were made for the purpose of record, "the only kind known to these savages in their backward stage." Mason observes, that they exhibit "a high degree of proficiency in the elemental art of drawing."[62]

In Siberia too, rock art is common, consisting of engravings or pecked drawings and paintings. One rock drawing shows[63] hunters with bows and arrows and two naked men, one with a spear. The antiquity of these pictures is not above controversy, and while a very early date may be held quite reasonable, some of them definitely belong to a much later period, about the first millennium A.D. But many recent finds have been made by Soviet archaeologists and there is no doubt that palaeolithic art existed in the Asian countries of the Soviet Union, especially in Siberia. Female statuettes similar to those of the Auringnasian period of Europe have occurred in the Russian plains, Malta,

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60. Cited in Leonhard Adams, *op. cit*, pp. 88—9.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

62. See *A History of the Art of Writing*, p. 44.

63. Discovered near Abansk in the Minusinsk district.

Yakutsk in Eastern Siberia and in Uzbekistan.[64] As regards the Yakutsk rock pictures, Prof. Okladnikor's team (which investigated about eighty prehistoric sites and groups of rock pictures) believes that they belong to the Bronze and Iron Ages and partly to the Neolithic and Palaeolithic periods too.[65] Miss Tatyana Passek, Secretary of the Institute of History of Material Culture of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, hails the cliffs near the village of Shiskino, on the Lena river as a museum of primitive art; she observes that "in many places, over a stretch of a kilometer and a half the cliffs are completely covered with drawings."[66] The most interesting piece, according to her, is a life size drawing of a wild horse in red paint, resembling similar drawings in palaeolithic caves in Western Europe.[67] Another instance of rock art is the Surukhtaakh Khaya cliff which is covered with drawings representing 'witch doctors, reindeer, cupolo-like structures and various symbols.'[68] The piece of the rock art from this region according to Leouhard Adams may be only a rough sketch, perhaps not quite accurate. He holds that it is not palaeolithic or neolithic art, but apparently belongs to the Bronze Age. "However incomplete the section illustrated here may be, at least one typically primitive feature is quite distinct, viz., 'X-ray' vision; that is to say, the representation of the inner parts of a body. This is one of the several characteristics which ancient Siberian art has in common with North west American art and other American art styles."[69] What has been called 'X-ray' vision may have played a vital role in the development of pictography and ideography; Leouhard Adams rightly regards it as the highest development of 'intellectual' as opposed to optical vision. His further remarks are quite opposite to the

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64. I have followed the account of prehistoric art in Siberia and Central Asia given in Leouhard Adams, *Primitive Art*, (1954).

65. According to Leouhard Adams if the latter date is correct it must be the upper palaeolithic as far as the rock art is concerned. (*Ibid.*, p.112).

66. *Ibid.*, cited on p. 112.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*, p. 113. The Surukhtaakh Khaya cliff is on the river Markha, a northern tributary of the river Vilyni, which is itself a tributary of the Lena. The site lies between 110° and 120° E. Long. and in about 65° N. Lat.

69. *Ibid.* p. 114.

evolution of writing also: "The accentuation of certain features in a figure often leads to the disregard of others, so that realistic representation is gradually abandoned. It is eventually replaced by symbolism where a few characteristic traits suffice to convey the idea of an object, and may be stylized and transformed into conventional signs. In an extreme stage of development an isolated claw and a single wing may symbolize a raven".[70]

HIEROGLYPHS

It cannot be decided, with the evidence at our command whether hieroglyphic or cuneiform writing is older. The consensus of opinion among scholars is that the development of the hieroglyph was parallel with the cuneiform, the Chinese, Mayan and other transitional scripts. Nevertheless some are of opinion that the entire script was artificially created at the time of the unification of Egypt under the first Dynasty.[71] It is true that the Egyptians had their fully developed system of writing even in the time of Menes, the first king of the First Dynasty, whose date according to Flinders Petrie is 4777 B.C. The words by then had a purely phonetic value and were regularly spelt out instead of being indicated by ideograms alone.[72] The purely pictographic stage had been passed and "remains a matter of inference."[73] But scholars who dispute the pictorial origin of the hieroglyphs hold "that the ancient names of the characters became obsolute so early that explanation for their phonetic value is discoverable even in the oldest inscriptions."[74] It is too much to believe that the hieroglyphs suddenly dawned on the people out of a vacuum, as it were. The primitive Egyptian ideograms are remarkably similar to the Ojibwa and Chinese symbols;[75] and the analogy of the evolution of other scripts can, by no means, be neglected. The theory of 'idea-diffusion' or stimulus-diffusion'

70. *Primtive Art*, pp. 37—38.

71. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

72. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, (Watts. 1948). p. 184.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Primitive Art*, p. 211.

75. *Ibid.*

according to which the script did not evolve gradually, but was invented by someone "who knew already of the existence of writing" is an attractive speculation. Holding that this suggestion is perhaps right, Diringer still admits that it is very difficult of proof.[76] In the absence of earlier records unfolding the evolution of the hieroglyphs the only legitimate thing to do is to suspend our judgement, waiting to learn more.

However Egyptian writing may have originated, there is little doubt that in its final stage it antedated the Pyramids "by many centuries of advanced culture."[77] "The earliest attempts at uniting must have preceded the Pyramids by a tremendous length of time if, as the evolutionary theory holds, the hieroglyphs had passed through the usual stages of primitive pictographs, ideographic characters and rebus writing, parallel to the stages of cuneiform writing. The hieroglyphic inscriptions represent the same mode of writing as those of 3000 years later. "Nevertheless, the cautious scholars consider the few ancient documents extant ....as a pure pictorial representation, namely as a picture only, and not as crude pictography, that is as picture writing or as transition from pictography to ideographic script, while the majority regard the documents as important evidence of the various initial stages in the development of hieroglyphic writing."[78]

In the Rosetta stone inscription, the earliest to be deciphered by Champollion, the characters are quite pictorial. The translation of the inscription here shows that the characters are largely phonetic signs, though purely ideographic signs are also found. The defect with phonograms is that they cannot precisely represent homonyms, especially monosyllabic words which have significations, though pronounced alike. In order exactly to

76. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

77. "The greater part of existing edifices upon the ancient soil appear to be not first essays, but the renaissance of the art of a civilization that had been interrupted by an invasion of barbarians anterior to the year 2000 before the Christian era. The inscriptions which decorate these monuments show us, in effect, the hieroglyphic writing already as complete in form as the last sculptured writings of the Egyptians of the second and third centuries after Christ" (Champollion quoted in Mason, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-7.)

78. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 58.9.

indicate which particular word is intended, it is necessary to add a determinative or explanatory ideogram.[79] However, this mixture of ideographs and phonographs in this and other Egyptian inscriptions as well as in Mexican picture writing according to the *Encyclopaedia Americana* does not prove the absolute precedence of ideographs.

"In our own system we use figures and other symbols when phonographic signs are too slow for our purpose, and with a less perfect phonographic system this would naturally occur much more frequently. It does not appear, moreover, that any transition from pictorial to phonetic writing is necessary through arbitrary non-phonetic symbols. Both of these modifications would no doubt proceed simultaneously from independent causes. Pictorial signs not phonetized would be abbreviated as well as phonetized signs and when the phonetized abbreviations came to prevail the non-phonetized abbreviations would be phonetized also, thus producing the appearance of a transition from arbitrary symbols to phonetic signs."[80]

Writing about the development of the syllabic and alphabetic signs in Egypt, Mason suggests that long before the final invention

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79. "Thus, if a figure of the *stork* represented the bird, the same with a flower or some leaves by its side would indicate a *stalk*, and a pair of legs by the side of another bird would determinate the action of *stalking*". (A. C. Haddon, *Evolution in Art, pp.* 217-18)

80. *Encyclopaedia Americana*, (1953), Vol. XXIX, p. 572.

"Nothing is easier than to make a rude pictorial representation of certain objects. To draw something resembling a man would be easier than to agree on a sign to represent the word man, hence ideographs would naturally precede phonetic symbols. But for the same reason, the earliest systems of writing would not be purely ideographic, but mixed. There are many things which from the subject of the least sophisticated human communications which cannot be represented pictorially. When writing was first practised these things were already represented by words, and the idea would naturally occur to form a sign to represent the word, that is, a phonetic sign. These signs could not be directly pictorical, but they might be allegorical or symbolic, and in the absence of analysis of sound they probably would take that form, although the direct intention was to suggest conventionally a speceific word by the symbol. This sort of symbol might be called mnemonic. From such symbols to merely arbitrary syllabic and alphabetic symbols the transition would be easy." (*Ibid.*)

of alphabetic signs a good number of syllabic symbols had been in vogue to express the phonetic values of monosyllabic words and symbols. These syllabic signs probably had been chosen from among the simplest or the commonest ideograms of mono-syllabic or polysyllabic words and used thereafter in writing as the phonograms of the initial syllables in these words: "The difference in use then was that the symbol which formerly was employed to indicate the name of an object or idea was later used as the sign for the sound of the first syllable of this name whenever it occurred in writing any polysyllabic word whatever."[81]

The Hu-nefer Papyrus reads from above downwards and to the right in the nine vertical columns and then continues in the the longtitudinal columns from left to right, interrupted by pictures and vignettes throughout its entire length. "Though the progression of the writing in the hieroglyphs is downward in the vertical columns and from left to right as the columns run, in each long horizontal line where there is more than one hieroglyph the reading is from right to left."[82] While the general belief is that the Egyptians had the world's first alphabet and there is no doubt that they had evolved it before 4000 B.C., it will be seen that they failed to make independent use of the alphabetic signs and it passes one's understanding why they just stopped short of the final stage. The hieroglyphs consist of alphabetic, syllabic and ideographic signs jumbled up often in the same word and further the same word could be represented by different signs. As Haddon observes pithily, "when a name was alphabetically written a phonogram was added to explain it and an ideogram (or pictograph) was added to explain the phonogram. The word as finally written was an accretion of various stages in its own evolution."[83]

The different signs for the same alphabetic sound were employed "according to the sentiment, implication and in some

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81. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 214. "For instance, the sign *pet* occuring several times in the inscription of Hu-nefer was originally the ideogram for 'heaven' *pet*. Later it was used as the sign for the syllable *pet* in any other word whenever it occured."

82. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

83. *Evolution in Art*, p. 219.

Fig. 8. a. Symbols representing things shown

b. Ideographs representing actions associated with things shown.

c. Symbols representing abstract ideas.

Fig. 9.A Hieroglyphic determinatives

Fig. 9-B Hieroglyphic bi-consonantal signs.

cases the delicacy of the context".[84] Vowels came first, but they were mostly disguised sounds.[85] A large number of these alphabetic signs as well as hieroglyphs, as we have seen, were pictorical; and Champollion has classified the hieroglyphic characters thus: heavenly bodies, the human figure and its parts, domestic and wild animals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, plants, fruits, flowers, clothing, furniture, armour, utensils, instruments, buildings, geometric forms and grotesque images.[86] In their alphabet one finds the eagle, reed, extended arm, chicken, leg, shutter, snail, owl, flowing water, mouth, lion, twisted cord, shovel, tank, bowl, altar, cap, hand, tongs and the serpent,[87] not to speak of the numerous duplicate signs and syllabic symbols.

The employment of hieroglyphic characters was three fold[88]: (a) word signs (*Fig.* 8); (b) phonograms and phonetic complements; and (c) determinatives (*Fig.* 9). The use of bare word signs being uncommon, phonograms were formed usually out of the bare root of their parent words. "Egyptian writing like the later Semitic alphabets, expressed consonants only, and as practically there was no need for three consonantal phonograms, the phonograms were bi-consonantal, (*Fig.* 10) or uniconsonantal.[89] The origin of some of them continues to be

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84. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 206. "For example in the case of the letter L, if it occured in the name of man, the "lion" was used; in the name of a queen the "lotus" was employed. There were twenty different A's to choose from, thirty H's and many different duplicates of nearly every letter in their Alphabet. (*Ibid.*, pp. 206-7).

85. "The first vowel, the 'eagle' was hardly *a*, but a more breathing." (*Ibid.*, p. 207).

86. *Ibid.*, p. 208

87. A few additional alphabetic and syllabic signs in frequent use were crane, battlement, hoe, stylus, stick, plants, feather, lasso, whip and the plan of a house. This list practically constitutes a secondary alphabet; yet there were numerous other symbols too, which the Egyptians used as Mason observes aptly "for the sake of variety as we use different words of the same meaning to avoid repetition and redundancy". (*Ibid.*, p. 209).

88. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 60.63.

89. "As the legs drawn forward or backward to indicate 'going' or 'coming', or bent to indicate 'jumping', the eye with drops to indicate 'crying' or 'grief' or two eyes to indicate 'seeing'; the ear to indicate 'hearing'; the tongue 'speaking'; the hand holding a vase to

obscure, while in a few instances there is a case for more than one origin, and in some others it cannot be definitely said whether acrophony played any considerable part; in the majority of cases, single consonants came to be denoted by symbols representing certain objects whose names (some of which had already fallen into disuse in very ancient times) contained prominently the consonant in question or, for reasons of phonetic decay were reduced to one syllable only. "However, that may be, the hieroglyphic writing contained twenty-four uni-consonantal signs."[90] Diringer wonders if the uniconsonantal signs constituted an alphabet.[91] It is true, as he states, that the most important phonograms were these uniconsonantal signs. Nevertheless, for reasons already outlined, these signs failed to have an effective alphabetic status; at best they may have constituted a quasi-alphabet.[92]

Mason suggests three stages in the development of Egyptian writing:—[93]

(1) Representative or imitative signs:—pictorial representations which subsequently became conventionalised and laid the foundation for the determinative ideograms used later;

(2) Symbolic signs: when it became necessary to portray actions, motives and sentiments are scribes resorted to (a) synecdoche—using a significant part instead of the whole of the figure[94] (b) metonymy portraying

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indicate 'offering'; two arms holding apaddle meaning 'to convey'; or an arm holding a shield meaning 'combat'; and many similar symbols. (Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 213).

90. Diringer. *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61

91. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

92. "Even if we agreed that the Egyptians had acquired an 'alphabet,' we should conclude that they did not know how to use it. As a matter of fact, in practice they did not employ it when they could use word-signs or multi.consonantal phonograms, and they never employed it without determinatives *i.e.*, signs which were not to be read, but served simply as guides to the sense of the word; thus the alphabetic signs needed to be guided". (*Ibid.*)

93. Mason, *op. cit.*, pp. 212.13.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

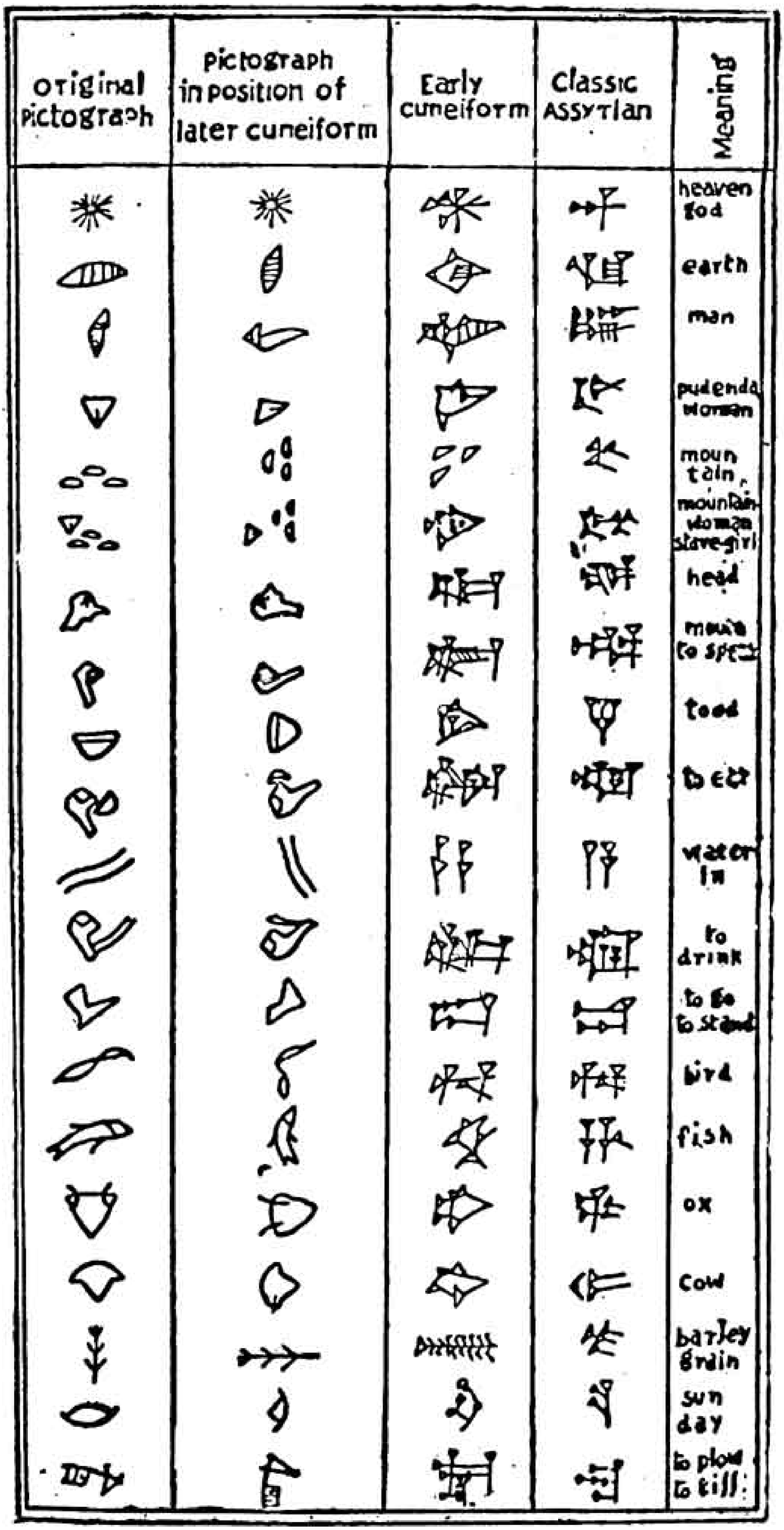

Fig. 10. Hieroglyphic phonograms

cause for effect and vice-versa employing the instrument to represent the effect produced[95] (c) metaphor, representing an idea by a resemblance, real or fancied to the properties of some object.[96]

(3) Phonetic signs: one may surmise two stages in this last period of the evolution of Egyptian hieroglyphs, viz., syllabic or alphabetic phoneticism, though we have no evidence as to which is prior.[97]

The hieroglyphs were used for inscriptions of a monumental character and as they had to last long writing was of the kind of 'elaborately drawn, carved or painted pictures of objects.' But for business, literary and epistilatory purposes, in view of the need for speed, hieroglyphic writing was wholly unsuitable, and so a cursive form adopted from hieroglyphs was used. It has been named hieratic (sacred or 'priestly') as it was mainly used by priests, in contradistinction to the demotic (demos = people) writing of the common run of people, which, however, was a much later offshoot. Diringer observes; "while the hieratic signs in their most cursive forms hardly retained any clear trace of the original hieroglyphic pictures, in fact they were only cursive transcriptions, sign by sign, of hieroglyphic symbols. In practice, however, many single signs were linked together by the sweep of the brush and so ligatured groups were formed."[98]

A kind of hieratic writing existed even in the period of the First Dynasty; but as it developed, it became obscure and with the emergence of the demotic writing in the seventh century B.C., it virtually became the script of the priests employed for transcribing religious texts and the like. The demotic was a highly cursive offshoot of the hieratic "and like it, as a symbol of writing was not more advanced than heiroglyphic since it was neither syllabic

95. As the sun to represent day or time; the moon to represent a month; the pictures of the various implements used in writing to indicate the act of writing etc. (Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 213.)

96. As a book to represent 'knowledge'; a lute, 'goodnes;' an eye 'judgement'; a crocodile, 'evil'; a bee, 'king': or the head of a line to indicate 'superiority.' (*Ibid.*)

97. Article in the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, cited earlier.

98. *The Alphabet*, p. 64.

nor alphabetic."[99] Its script thus consisted mainly of word-signs, phonograms and determinatives. Yet externally and "in addition whole associated groups of hieratic characters were fused by ligatures into single demotic signs." Demotic writing developed over a period of four hundred years and received its stereotyped form in the fourth century B.C. It is written from right to left and it is by no means easy to read. As Diringer says the main difficulty lies not in the language, but in the script.[100] During the Ptolemaic period demotic gained importance over hieratic and became equal in status to Greek and hieroglyphic. Decrees, temporal and spiritual, were engraved in triplicate, in hieroglyphic, demotic and Greek versions. Its use continued till the end of the fifth century A.D.; some of the demotic signs, for sounds not expressible by Greek letters, were assimilated by coptic alphabet.[101]

CUNEIFORM

Cuneiform was, so to say, the multi-national script of ancient times unlike the Egyptian systems of writing.[102] The resuscitation of the lost languages of Mesopotamia is a romantic, yet solemn tale. Thanks to the efforts of Grotefund (in 1821). Rawlinson (in 1851) and others we have gained an insight into the genius behind the languages and their cuneiform script, so named, owing to the wedge-like character of the strokes of the writing. Many of the inscriptions so far found have been incised "on soft clay subsequently baked, with a blunt pointed instrument or stylus, probably the three-sided stem of a rush which produced these wedge-like marks."[103] There are inscriptions on slate, marble, alabaster and other stones too, but, "the wedges which were natural and incident to incriptions in soft clay were copied in the stone and became the standard forms in the written syllabary however and wherever used."[104] The wedges are

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99. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 67,

100. *Ibid.*

101. *Ibid.*

102. "The Egyptain scripts were essentially national.........; they originated in Egypt, they were employed only for Egyptian speech, they developed in Egypt and they died out in Egypt." *Ibid*, p. 63.

103. Mason, *op. cit.*, 232.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

separatad from one another, well arranged in precise groupings constituted by syllables, the script itself being syllabic. A careful observer will not fail to see the latent pictoriality of the syllabic signs. As Mason writes, "they were but the survivals of an extremely archaic script, linear and pictorial in its character, of which they were the direct lineal descendants."[104a] The pictographs represented objects, both animate and inanimate. According to Professor Speiser "the property marks, the primitive prototypes of those which appear on the Mesopotamian cylender seals, were the beginnings of the script out of which the cuneiform system arose."[105] It is well known that in the course of excavations in Mesopotamia the lower strata progressively showed the nature of the script to be essentially pictorial and finally we come across inscriptions in which the wedges have disappeared altogether, "and each sign is drawn in lines—no longer writing as we know it but veritable outline drawing."[106]

In course of time the pictorial characters must have advanced further and thus arose a second stage in the development of cuneiform, namely that of symbols standing for abstract ideas. "As soon as the need for the representation of continuous discourse arose, it became evident that a number of the vital elements of speech, such as inflexions, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions or personal names; especially of foreigners, could not be represented by this means. Hence, the picture-symbols came to be used to represent not only objects or related abstract ideas, but also the phonetic value of words without any regard to their meaning as pictures. In other words the cuneiform writing became a *rebus-writing*; many symbols were "sound-pictures" or phonograms, symbolizing word-sounds as such, or "phonetic complements."[107]

The Father Schiel Tablet,[108] which is one of the oldest, exhibits characters wholly pictographic without any manifestation of convention. They are drawn upright in vertical columns and are

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104a. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

105. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

106. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

107. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

108. The inscriptions have been generally named after the discoverers.

to be read downward and from right to left (as indicated) by the numbers at the top of the tablet. The first column is occupied by the proper name 'Garduengub' spelt with phonetic and syllabic characters as proper names and cannot be pictured otherwise.[109] Similarly in the 'Monuments Blau' the characters have just begun to progress beyond the ideographic stage and there is a combination of written characters and pictorial drawings. In the Hoffman tablet as well as in the collection of Babylonian tablet in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, one character occurs three times, each time drawn differently. And as in the 'Monuments Blau' "the characters are not placed above each other nor in vertical registers, but are disposed for the most part horizontally, reading from right to left along the horizontal lines rather than downward."[110]

The cuneiform symbols had an extensive range of expression; there were polyphones as well as homophones. As the latter had similar phonetic values but represented different objects, clarity in communication had to be provided by determinatives, that is signs placed beside the words to be clarified, and yet not pronounced. The determinative indicated the meaning of a word by denoting precisely the class to which the object belongs. "In general the same cuneiform sign might stand for a simple syllable or vowel, or it might express a whole idea or word by itself, or yet again it might indicate only the class in which the particular word was being employed."[111] However, in the gradual process of simplification the pictures were conventionalized and thus only the bare features necessary for ready identification, happened to be retained; the script too became linear.

Thus a permanent change came over in the position of the signs and they were drawn on their sides in horizontal rows and

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109. "The characters in Garduengub's name really are pictures, or atleast ideographs. The first one appears to be an early form of the symbol for 'night' and closely resembles the Chinese, Egyptian and Ojibwa symbols for night. The second character probably represents a covered pot: the third a throne: and the fourth obviously a human foot. The remainder of the inscription is written in characters probably largely ideographic" (Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 239).

110. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

111. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

as a result the reading was from left to right. The account given here is far too simple and short to bring home the immense vicissitudes and the numerous stages which had to be passed through before any stability could be gained.

The original signs, as Diringer points out, have not survived, as the people, perhaps, employed perishable materials, such as, wood or a kind of papyrus leaf.[112] Early Mesopotamian writing survives on a few clay tablets where the signs already appear quite developed. "About 3200 B.C. some scribes found it convenient to turn the tablet in such a way that the pictographs appear lying on their back while in inscriptions on stone or metal the old position of the signs persisted for a few centuries more".[113] Later the monumental inscriptions also adopted the system of the clay tablets and the signs came to be regularly turned at an angle of 90 degrees. (*Fig.* 10, Col. 2) "The change from the linear script to wedge shaped strokes (*Fig.* 10, Col. 3) was not a device deliberately chosen, but came about more or less by accident" occasioned by the use of the stylus.[114] By Hammurabi's time, thus, conventionalization had advanced so far that the resemblance of the cuneiform characters, then well established,

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112. Diringer, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-46.

113. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

114. *Ibid.*, p. 48. "The Sumerians found themselves in a country abounding in clay, and in using it as a writing material, they soon discovered that one could draw a character in the wet clay—the written clay-tablets or bricks being exposed to the sun and baked hard, so that the record became durable—much better and more quickly by impressing them than by scratching. On the other hand curves, circles and fine long lines could not be impressed satisfactorily, so that all these lines, curves and circles were replaced by combinations of short, straight, vertical, horizontal or oblique strokes or angles. These were impressed, line by line, with the edge of a broad-headed *stylus*, consisting of a straight piece of stick of reed, bone, hard wood or metal. Assyrian monuments represent scribes holding the stylus in their closed fist and pressing upon the tablet. Naturally, the strokes impressed were thick on the top and on the left—the direction of writing being then from left to right—thus giving birth to a series of wedge-shaped characters, called by the users 'fingers'; and this peculiarity became more pronounced as time went on. The wedge-constructed characters, once they had been standardized, were cut on stone, metal, glass and other hard material." (*Ibid.*)

to their linear prototpyes may be discovered only by a practised eye, though the grouping of the cuneiform characters into forms traceable to the original ideographs was still apparent.[115]

The cuneiform system, when simplified by the Assyrians still totalled about 570 signs, with some 300 of them in frequent use. Later the Assyrian cuneiform virtually became a syllabic script and the persians, influenced by the Aramaic alphabet reduced it to a quasi-alphabetic system.[116] The Medic tribes added four vowel sounds to the twenty consonants recognised by them, and along with some other changes evolved about thirty-six or thirty-seven alphabetic and syllabic signs.[117]

CHINESE WRITING

To a foreigner Chinese writing presents a strange sight; the reason, however, is not far to seek. The apparent modernity of most other modern scripts is conspicuous by its absence in Chinese writing. This modernity is after all their phonetic development; and Chinese writing is wholly different from them not only in the forms

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115. Mason, *op.cit.*, p. 263.

116. Diringer, *op.cit.*, p. 48.

"The use of Sumerian characters to write Semitic names may have accelerated the conversion of ideographic into phonetic signs. But it complicated the result. A given sign is now liable to stand for one or more concepts, the sound of the Sumerian name of the concepts and the sound of the corresponding Semitic word. The complexity is much greater, since the same sign even in Sumerian might stand for several words, and so for several sounds. Probably Sumerians and Babylonians never felt any difficultly here, but for modern scholars the transliteration of Sumerian names into European alphabets is always difficult, and readings change. Within the last ten years, for instance *ur.nina* has been changed to *Ur.nanshe*, *Ur.engur* to *Ur.nammu* and so on." (Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, p. 183.)

117. The ordinary Persian writing was identical with that of the Medic. A cuneiform alphabet, consisting of some thirty-six or thirty-seven forms, expressive of some twenty.three distinct sounds sufficed for the wants of the people, whose language was simple and devoid of phonetic luxuriance. Writing was from left to right as with the Aryan nations generally. Words were separated from one another by an oblique wedge; and were divided at any point at which the writer happened to reach the end of the line." (George Rawlinson, *The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*, quoted in Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 264.)

of its characters, but in their basic structure as it is still ideographic, though very much conventionalised. There is no systematic correspondence between the written characters and the sounds they represent. "The Chinese written language has no alphabet, for it has no spelling. It likewise has no visible parts of speech. The same character without change of form may be used as a noun, verb or adjective; all grammatical relations being indicated by position in the sentence. It is a language of roots and has no grammatical terminations to denote number, case, tense, person or other grammatical modifications. There are no inflections, the language being devoid of conjugation, declension and every form of grammatical construction. There are devices employed for indicating parts of speech, but they do not affect the drawing of the characters, which are made up of an old assortment of ideograms, phonograms and arbitray symbols, often combined in the most illogical and whimsical manner."[118]

The reason for the peculiarity of the script, as Diringer observes, lies in the language itself.[119] The three kinds of human speech are the isolating, agglutinative and the inflecting. The Indo-European and the Semitic languages are familiar instances of the inflectional variety. Chinese belongs to the Tibeto-Chinese family of languages, which are partly agglutinative and partly isolating. Perhaps, Chinese, as such, was once an agglutinative speech, but is now isolating, that is, it does not contain terminations or other grammatical forms.[120]

"The old prefixes and suffixes having been worn away and having lost their significance are replaced by independent words without the possibility of a real inflexion. Thus, as a rule, if it is desired to modify the sense of a word in respect to time, place or other relation, this is not done by adding a prefix or suffix (that is by incorporation of a vowel or a syllable with the main word as it is done in the agglutinative languages) but by adding some other separate word having a meaning of its own. Therefore, the whole language as spoken in its many dialects and written in a number

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118. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

119. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

120. *Ibid.*

of ways, consists of rudimentary monosyllables and compounds made from monosyllables."[121]

The 'tones' in Chinese speech, an apparent obstacle to the foreigner, acually render the language easier. They are indeed vital to the speech, almost as important as the vowels. The same word uttered on a low pitch may mean one thing on a rising pitch another, and on the high pitch yet another. Some scholars, therefore, call Chinese and allied languages 'polytonic'.[122] The Chinese syllables numbering about four hundred and fifty together make up some one thousand two hundred combinations, largely owing to these tones. And yet even these one thousand two hundred words should be hardly sufficient but for *homonyms*, that is words with same sounds but different meanings.[123]

It would thus be clear that every distinct idea must have a separate sign peculiar to itself, and that every new idea would require a new symbol distinct from any of the old symbols. As the language developed, to represent complex ideas in writing special characters had to be evolved.[124]

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121. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

122. The number of tones vary from language to language and dialect to dialect.

123. "If these hamonyms were to be written in alphabetic script, the ambiguity would certainly be much greater than it is in the present writing, in which, for example for the sound *shih* there are 239 characters (54, 40, 79 and 66 respectively for the different tones)....................... However, thanks to the means of variation (that is, the tones) each word is pronounced in a different musical note, and the Chinese language has been able to retain its power of expression. Another device which facilitates to understand the exact meaning is the employment of "synonym.compounds," that is to say, pairs of words of similar meaning which make each other recognisable." (Diringer, *op.cit.*, pp. 99-100.)

124. For instance an idea such as: "to announce the death of a parent or relative by the nearest mourners on the seventh day" was represented by the following character:

In. this, the left hand character in the compouud is, the sign 'to speak'; the right hand one is that for 'to devine.' The square shaped figure in the first character is the picture of the mouth, and is its written symbol. The four lines above it represent 'words.' All three signs are among the 214 radicals which form the basis of the written languages. The spoken word that stands for all this circumlocution is simply 'fu.' The character for the same

Fig. 11. Chinese gestures (1-2 command; 3.5 vow, oath; 6-9 refusal; 10 refuse to marry; 11 usurpation.)

Despite all these oddities, speaking from the stand point of the evolution of the script itself it must be said that Chinese writing too was originally pictographic. Even the present day conventionalized script exhibits recognisable traces of its original pictographic nature, and this is particularly so as regards the construction of the characters. But the subsequent evolution of Chinese writing is not entirely along the lines of development of other scripts. As Mason observes, "it is not exactly ideographic nor is it purely phonetic. Many words are wholly ideographic and few are exclusively phonetic. It appears to be a system based on ideography advancing into phoneticism, but arrested at this stage"[125] We have therefore to conclude that Chinese writing got stuck up in the 'transitional' stage. The question of the origin of Chinese writing is far from clear. The influence of Cuneiform has been suggested, but as Diringer remarks, this does not seem probable.[126] Of course there are certain internal similarities, but they obtain among all ideographic scripts. Diringer holds that the theory of idea-diffusion gives us perhaps the right solution; but as we have already observed, that theory is still in the realm of speculation.[127] Based on the same theory is the notion that some great Chinese personality, influenced by writing in Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley and elsewhere, must have invented Chinese writing. Traditional belief attributes writing to the influence of the eight mystic trigrams, *pa kua* (eight divination-diagrams), commenly employed in divinations, and the hexagrams derived from the trigrams or to the knot-device similar to the ancient Peruvian *quipus*.[128] However that may be, the use of tally-sticks, the typical Chinese gestures (*Fig.* 11), ornamentation, ritual symbolism and similar factors must have definitely played an appropriate role in the evolution of the characters of Chinese writing.[129]

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word 'fu' meaning father is a hand with two marks over it; being an illustration of the world-wide ethics of domestic responsibility." (Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 157.)

125. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

126. Diringer, *op, cit.*, pp. 100-101.

127. See *ante*.

128. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 102

129. *Ibid.*

Mason suggests the following classification of the Chinese characters:[30]

i. *Hsiang hsing*: Pictograms or hieroglyphs, which include all the characters representing the conventionalized rendering of primative pictures, totalling some six hundred, of which two hundred and fourteen signs have been selected as keys or determinatives, the so-called radicals.

ii. *Chih shih*: Suggestive signs, representing ideas to the mind by the relative positions of the component parts of the signs: as the ideograph of the sun above a line—the horizon—to suggest the idea of 'morning'.

iii. *Hui i*: Combined ideograms: Characters made up of two or more of primitive signs so associated as to convey the meaning of the idea to the mind through the eye: as the sun and the moon to indicate 'light'; a mouth or a bird to indicate singing.

iv. *Chuan chu*: Inverted signs: Signs in which the meaning is conveyed by the inversion of the character of a significant change in position of its component parts—as the hands pointing to the right or the left to indicate these directions, or characters above or below a line to indicate these positions.

v. *Chia chieh*: Metaphysical or borrowed signs—compound signs which suggest a fanciful meaning borrowed from the association of signs in the character—as 'beautiful' represented by a woman and a bird; love by a woman and a child.

vi. *Hsieh sheng*: Phonograms—These constitute the mass of the written characters in the language. They are composed of different, specific, phonetic signs combined with one or more ideographic determinatives or 'radicals' to give the particular meaning and to distinguish between homophones. In writing, the Chinese do precisely as the Egyptians did: set the picture of the speciefic idea or thing intended—the ideograph—beside the phonogram to illustrate the particular meaning and differentiate from many other homonyms.

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30. Mason, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-9.

The radicals, called *tse-pu*, used, as we have seen, as determinatives may be classified into the following kinds :

1. Natural objects and phenomena.
2. Botanical and mineral objects :—wheat, rice, bamboo, salt, metal, stone, gems etc.
3. Zoological objects :—man including parts of the body, horse, dog, ox, tiger etc.
4. Utensils :—knife, spoon, vase, boat etc.
5. Actions :—to see, to eat, to touch, to walk slowly, to kill, to enter etc.
6. Qualities :—large, small, high, low, slender, black, perverse etc.

According to Diringer, there are two fields of development in the history of Chinese writing :—[131]

1) The external forms of the Chinese symbols and
2) The systematization of the Chinese characters.

The major changes in the shapes of the single symbols arose from the changes in the materials used for writing. For instance, when the narrow bamboo stylus was used to write on silk and slips of bamboo or wood, lines and curves could be easily traced and they were all of equal thickness. Bronze toois, shaped like the 'burin' or knives were employed for the engraved script. The use of the writing-brush called *pi*, made of elastic hair, exercised a good deal of influence on the formal evolution of the script. Curves virtually straightened, and the characters were made more conventional, 'obliterating' thus the likeness to the original pictures. Further development was initiated by the invention of paper in A. D. 105.

The main varieties of early Chinese writing are the *ku wen* or ancient figures; the *ta Chuan* or 'greater seal'; the *hsias Chuan* or 'lesser seal' and *li shu* or 'official script'.[132] There were

131. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

132. Five other kinds of Chinese writing said to have been employed under the Ch'in dynasty (221-206 B.C.) are the *k'o fu*, inscribed on tallies, the *ch'ung shu*, fanciful characters shaped like birds or insects, the *mu yin*, used for stamps or seals, and two varieties of the *shu shu*, one employed for official notices and the other used for inscriptions. Another style of writing, the *pa fen* lies midway between the *hsiao chann* and *li shu* (*Ibid.*, p. 107).

many varieties of *li shu*, which developed in course of time. Apart from these, Chinese calligraphy knows many other forms, more than hundred ornamental scripts with fancy names.[133]

The systematization of Chinese characters should be given due importance in any survey of Chinese writing. What with the 'ideographic-transitional' nature of the script, and its many varieties which have evolved in the course of historical development, the vast territory of China and the poor means of communication, there was the "excessive multiplication of symbols including numerous useless, doubles, abbreviations, cursive varieties, faulty forms due to the ignorance of many scribes and so forth."[134] In order to steer clear of this veritable jungle of symbols, Chinese scholars even in early times were particularly engaged in introducing some method in their writing. The main problem was classifying the written characters into groups according to their affinity. The earliest attempt was made in *Erh ya* compiled about the eleventh century B.C. In the third century B.C. Li Ssu published the official catalogue, *San ts'ang*, containing 3,300 characters. In the second century A.D. Hsü Shēn brought out the lexicon, *Shuo wēn*, improving on Li Ssu's catalogue and classifying the Chinese characters. He reproduced 10,516 symbols (of which 9,353 were simples and 1,163 doubles) under 540 rational *keys* or *radicals* (classifiers). With the sixth century A.D. commences the publication of phonetic dictionaries; classification was based on the sound and tone of the words. Since then phonetic dictionaries had been published, off and on, down to the eighteenth century A.D. when "K'ang-hsi (1662-1772) published his famous dictionary containing 44,449 Chinese characters classified under 214 keys only, the greater part of the symbols, more than 30,000 being either out of date or doubles or faulty signs."[135]

We have already noted the six-fold classification of Chinese characters followed by the Chinese lexicographers.[136] The main difficulty in any study of Chinese writing is that it is not organically integrated with the language as such. As Diringer notes, it "represents the forgotten speech of several thousand

133. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

134. *Ibid.*

135. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

136. See *ante*.

years ago. It appeals therefore to the eye rather than to the ear. The Chinese written language, notable for its richness of expression and flexibility, is in its rules of composition, its style and its vocabulary, far removed from the vernacular, which, besides, developed dialects so different that they are mutually almost unintelligible. Scholars who cannot understand each other's speech can read the same books and communicate by writing".[137]

The classification followed in modern dictionaries is threefold: (1) according to the meaning of the words; (2) phonetic, according to the sound and the 'tones' and (3) graphic according to the external from of the symbols. On the whole there are 214 categories of characters in Chinese writing, distinguished by certain *radicals* or *keys*, according to the number of strokes they contain. The direction of writing is vertical, from above downwards, the columns arranged from right to left.

By its very nature Chinese writing was very complicated and cumbrous to influence people of other cultures. Yet the Annamites and some non-Chinese people of China adopted it not to speak of the Japanese.[138] The Japanese who learnt the art of writing from the Chinese were responsible for a thorough simplification of the script occasioned by the structure of their language.[139] Japanese is a polysyllabic language while Chinese is monosyllabic. "The Chinese characters which are verbal phonograms could only be used for the polysyllabic Japanese words by being treated as syllabic signs. A number of characters sufficient to constitute a syllabary having been selected from the numerous Chinese verbal phonograms, it was found that the whole apparatus of determinatives (or *keys*, *radicals* or

137. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 110. "Tradition assigns the invention of the development of Chinese 'phonetics' or spelling to Buddhist missionaries from India translating their sacred books into Chinese, who were anxious to introduce some system in order to read and explain their holy scriptures correctly. However, the most important system of Chinese spelling is the syllabic method *fan ch'ieh* which gives the sound of a character by writing two other characters, the first to represent the initial and the palatalization, the second to represent the final—including the vowel—the labialization and the tone." (*Ibid.*)

138. Chinese writing has, however, influenced externally many other scripts, particularly the Mongolian scripts and the Korean alphabet. (*Ibid.*, p. 117.)

139. Haddon, *Evolution in Art*, p. 218.

primitives as they are termed in describing Chinese writing) might be rejected, being no longer indispensable to the reader. By these two changes an almost incredible simplification of the Chinese writing was effected. But though syllabism is a great advance on a system of verbal phonograms, yet it is necessarily somewhat cumbrous owing to the considerable number of characters which are required."[140]

We have seen how the Egyptians too stopped short of the final development of true alphabetic writing. This only confirms that there must be a large gap between the penultimate and the ultimate stages. The Semites who lived in the delta of lower Egypt during the five or six centuries of the Hyskos dynarty, seized on the alphabetic symbols of the cursive Hieratic developed by the Egyptian scripts for secular writings. "Their language and mode of thought being different from that of the Egyptian scribe, and having no sacred traditions to hamper them, they were able to break away from the trammels of antiquity. They were wise enough to drop the useless number of the phonogram and ideogram and so they dissected out, as it were, the alphabet from the cursive hieratic."[141] This reform of the script was a vital necessity for them as it gave them 'a ready and simple method for recording business transactions.' The spread of the alphabet to other lands and peoples is mainly due to the early oversea traders, the Phoenicians, who distributed it, so to say, along with their wares. The Greeks who also had learnt the alphabet from the Phoenicians, however, perfected it to a degree not contemplated by others. This improvement in notation "enabled them to register thoughts more ennobling than the records of commerce. It is scarcely conceivable that Greece could have risen to her intellectual pre-eminence if she had been shackled with phonetic writing. Evolution in notation is necessary for the evolution of mental processes."[142]

140. The development of Japanese writing stopped with the invention of the syllabaries. "The fact that during more than a thousand years it should never have occurred to a people so ingenious as the Japanese to develop their syllabary into an alphabet may suffice to show that the discovery of the alphabetic principle of writing is not such an easy or obvious matter as might be supposed." (Isaac Taylor, quoted in Haddon, *op cit.*,)

141. Haddon, *op. cit.*, p.220.

142. *Ibid.*

The short survey of the history of writing in the foregoing pages does not include many of the deeper aspects of the problems; neither is it extensive in its range, as many countries have been omitted, mainly for considerations of space. And for its length perhaps it is too cramped with somewhat technical details, the contours of which are none too clear; and thus, it may be that facts often get telescoped into speculations. Yet in one sense, this arrangement is inevitable—but not undesirable for that—for where we do not have incontrovertible evidence we are tempted to build probable hypotheses and the line between hypothesis and pure speculation is often quite thin. The study of writing is still not such a well-developed subject as some of the other branches of history. There is plenty of research to be done, many intricate questions to be answered and for all we know, as we answer them more questions will crop up. And thus we go on goaded by the urge for that elusive ideal of perfection. Already we have many a mighty achievement to our credit, but more is to be learnt. We have gathered a fair percentage of good wheat, but the harvest is not yet over.

APPENDIX

ROCK PAINTINGS AND ENGRAVINGS IN INDIA

The question whether there was any ideographic script that preceded the evolution of true writing in India as is found in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, has not found a good answer. This is not due to the paucity of material evidence on the subject but due to the indeterminable nature of most of the material available with regard to their chronology and place in the evolution of writing in India.

It is difficult to ascertain the pre-historic nature of the rock paintings and engravings in India. Flake tools and microlithic implements have been collected from many sites in North India where rock paintings have also been noticed. In the Deccan rock paintings and engravings have been found near sites which have yielded neolithic implements and pottery. Thus it may be seen that the central table land of India, excluding the Indus and Gangetic valleys, and the Deccan plateau form the cradle of Indian rock paintings and engravings. Most of these, however, are not datable with any amount of certainty, but can be generally ascribed to the first or second quarter of the first millennium B. C. at the earliest. To the early series of Rock paintings belong those found in the Mahadeo Hills in Madhya Pradesh, and classified by D. H. Gordon as belonging to the Early First Series.[1] These are mainly line sketches of human figurines and animals, the 'ape-man' and carpet designs with tasselled hem. These drawings are followed by three more Series, the last of which is dated as late as the tenth century A.D. Gordon in view of the 'unbroken' 'succession' linking one series to the next, suggests therefore that "the earliest of these paintings cannot be taken back earlier than c. 700 B. C."[2]

On the analogy of the harpoons and spear-heads from the Gangetic Valley copper hoards, the painted spear-heads from Likhunia (Mirzapur), are ascribed to the eighth century B.C., as their earliest date. There are other paintings from Mirzapur

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1. *The Pre-Historic Background of Indian Culture*, p. 101.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

which depict hunting scenes, animals and birds. These have parallels from Hoshangabad and Singanpur.[3]

In the last decade, archaeological explorations in the districts of Madhya Pradesh have thrown valuable light on the antiquity of the rock-paintings in India. A large number of microlithic implements have been collected from the rock-shelter at Adamgarh Quarry.[4] M. G. Dikshit discovered them in the rock-shelters of Kabra Pahar[5] and at Mori and Awra in the Mandasor district.[6] In the rock shelter at Modi, M. V. Trivedi, assisted by V. S. Wakankar, excavated a trench 'which yielded eight layers, a coloured stone and haematite-coloured granules.'[7]

Early Brāhmī inscriptions have been reported from some caves in Madhya Pradesh. In one of the rock shelters bearing rock paintings near Kharwai in the Raisen district, an Aśokan Brāhmī inscription consisting of three letters has been noticed.[8] In one of the rock shelters at Bhinyapura, twenty miles south of Bhopal, V. S. Wakankar reports an early Brāhmī inscription in characters of the second century B.C.

In the Deccan though the rock paintings and engravings are scattered in groups, a good number of them are found in the Raichur district "at Koppal, Piklihal, Maski, Billarayan Gudda and in the Benkal forest."[9] The early paintings are coloured in a dark red ochre. These paintings generally represent animals, armed men, horse-riders and hunting or chasing scenes.

Pecked rock engravings are found on the Gombigudda hill in the Belgaum district, at Chiltaldrug in Mysore and Kuppagallu near Bellary. The last of these is adjacent to the excavated site of Sanganakallu. The engravings at Kuppagallu shows animal

3. See M. Ghosh, 'Exploration of Rock-paintings and Prehistorics,' *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 24, pp. 9-21.

4. *Indian Archaeology, A Review*, 1954-55, p. 59.

5. *Ibid.*, 55.56, p. 69.

6. *Ibid.*, 57-58, p. 26-28.

7. *Ibid.*, 58-59, p. 28.

8. *Indian Archaeology—A Review*, 1960—61.

9. Allchin, *Development of Early Culture in the Raichur District*, p. 257-54.

motifs pecked in outline. There are some later pecked engravings also showing human sexual motifs.

While dealing with the chronology of the Prehistoric paintings and engravings and their association with the Prehistoric Cultures in India, it must be borne in mind that there is no correlation between the periods such as the Chalcolithic and Neolithic between Western Asia and Europe on the one hand and India on the other. Therefore there is a vast range of difference between the periods, techniques and themes of the cave paintings in India and those in other countries. It is important to note here that the rock paintings and engravings, respectively attributed to the Chalcolithic and Neolithic folk in India are only the casual handiwork of the people who did not have any developed script for their language. Hence these paintings and engravings do not contribute much for a study of the origin and evolution of writing in India. On the other hand pictographs or picture-writing, in the form of grafitti marks, found on the pottery of the Chalcolithic and Megalithic Cultures of India, open a new field for intensive study and research.[10]

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10. The study in this field started long ago by M. Yazdani has been taken up again by scholars like B. B. Lal and a few others. (See B.B. Bal's article, 'From the Megalithic to the Harappa: tracing back the grafitti on the pottery' in *Ancient India*, Number 16 (1960), pp. 1-24 and plates 1-xxxiv)

CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF WRITING IN INDIA

More than seventy years ago R. N. Cust, the then Honorary Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, London, published an article 'on the origin of the Indian Alphabet' in the Journal of the Society.[1] But he was not the first to attempt to solve the mystery of the origin of the Indian alphabet. Earlier still many others had paid their best attention to the problem, *i.e.*, even from the beginning of the last century. But the attempt of Cust reviewing the position as it then stood and formulating his own conclusions came in just when in India too regular and systematic survey of the archaeological and epigraphical material available had been begun. Since then many scholars have studied the subject from various angles and produced a vast literature. Still, there has been no unanimous opinion on the origin of scripts in India. Even on the Brāhmī script, the earliest known in India, there exists to-day much difference of opinion among scholars.

Though Sir William Jones hazarded his theory on the origin of the Indian alphabet as early as 1806 and was followed in the attempt by some others, yet it cannot be said that the question received any importance or much attention till the Brāhmī inscriptions of Aśoka were deciphered by James Prinsep in 1837.[2] The study of his decipherment of the script is itself very interesting and reads very much like fiction.

During this long period of over a century and a half many theories, some of them very fantastic, have been suggested. A few of them still hold the field, while the majority of them have received no support at all.

Theories concerning the origin of the Brāhmī script, varied as they are, may be conveniently divided into two main groups: one ascribing a foreign origin to the Brāhmī script *i.e.*, that it was borrowed from some foreign source and the other claiming an indigenous origin for it, *i.e.*, the script was invented and developed in India itself.

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1. *J. R. A. S.* (N.S.), XVI (1884), pp. 325-359.
2. *J. A. S. B.* III, pp. 7 and 485. (Plate 5.).

Even among the protagonists of the theory of a foreign origin for the script there are wide divergences of opinion as to the country from which and the channel through which India borrowed the script. These different theories about its foreign origin may be reviewed here.

Greek Origin:

James Prinsep was the first scholar who successfully unravelled the mysteries of the Brāhmī script. He was inclined to ascribe the alphabet of the Aśokan inscriptions to the Greek source. In this view he was followed by Otfried Mueller and some time after even by Èmile Senart.[3] The same view also appears to have been shared by Raoul de Rochette, Goblet d'Alviella and others.[4] Prinsep and Mueller seem to have based their view on the guess hazarded by Wilson that "Aśoka's Buddhists derived their letters from Greek or Phoenician models," taking the former of the alternatives suggested as their source.[5] It may be true that there are resemblances between the Greek and the earliest Brāhmī characters. But the theory of Greek origin is beset with formidable difficulties relating to both chronology and philology. These have never been successfully answered. It is fairly certain that the Brāhmi script was used in India even before the days of Aśoka. Taking into consideration the various forms (recensions or varieties) of the Brāhmī script noticed in the inscriptions of Aśoka, it will not be incorrect to conclude that it should have been in vogue in the country for a long time to attain such variations by natural evolution. The Indians came into direct contact with the Greeks only long after their acquaintance with other peoples using alphabetic writing. If it was a question of borrowing they would have borrowed from other alphabetic systems and not the Greek which was itself a borrowed one. Diringer also says that "the main improvement of the Greek alphabet on the Semitic was the introduction of vowels, while the chief weakness of the Indian scripts is their unsatisfactory solution of vocalization."[6] This

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3. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 253, Isaac Taylor, *The Alphabet*, Vol. II, p. 304,
4. Diringer, *op., cit.*, p. 335.
5. 'The Origin of the Brāhmī Alphabet' by Dr. I. J. S. Taraporewala. *Proceedings of the Fourth All.India Oriental Conference*, p. 625.
6. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

would not have happened if it had been the result of any borrowing. This apart, as regards the resemblance between the Greek and Brāhmī characters, it actually seems to be the other way. There is no doubt that the Greek alphabet was deeply indebted to the Phoenician characters. This does not necessarily suggest a Phoenician origin for the Brāhmī script for it is even suggested by some scholars that the Phoenicians themselves were of Indian origin (the Vedic Paṇi) who very probably carried with them the art of writing and spread it in Western Asia.[7] The Phoenician alphabet itself has been put forward as the parent of the Brāhmī script and this will be considered separetely below.

Hellenistic influence on the invention of the Brāhmī script has been suggested by Joseph Halevy and others.[8] Halevy maintained that the Brāhmī was derived from a mixture of Aramaic, Kharoṣṭhi and Greek letters in the last quarter of the fourth century B.C. But we know that the Brāhmī had been in existence even before that period. In the words of Dr. Bühler "this theory may be at once eliminated as it does not agree with the literary and palaeographic evidences."[9] Consequently the theory of the Greek origin of the Brāhmī script had long been given up.

Chinese Origin:

Terrein de la Couperie thought that the original source of the Brāhmī was to be sought in the Chinese picture-writing. But this suggestion cannot be accepted. As said earlier the Chinese writing is only in the ideographic form. It has never passed that transitional stage, and thus has never reached even the syllabic stage. But the Brāhmī is a fully developed script. Thus this fanciful theory need not be considered seriously. In fact nobody seems to have bestowed much thought to it. The theory was discarded long ago.

Assyrian (Cuneiform) Origin:

Scholars like Deecke and Canon Issac Taylor have argued that the origin of the Brāhmī script should be sought in the Assyrian Cuneiform through the South Semitic (which was also the parent

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7. R. B. Pandey, *Indian Palaeography*, Vol. I, p. 40.
8. *Journal Asiatique*, (1858), p. 268.
9. *Indian Palaeograhy*, (*Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXIII, App., p. 9.)

of the Sabaen or Himyaritic script) as an intermediate step. Rhys Davids also derived the Brāhmī from the same source. He suggested that the only hypothesis harmonising these discoveries is that the Indian letters were derived from the alphabet of neither the Northern nor the Southern semites, but from the source to which those, in their turn, owed their origin *i.e.*, the pre-Semitic form of writing used in the Euphrates Valley[10]. But "this great authority on Buddhist literature is practically alone in his theory, which is unsubstantiated by any important evidence in its favour".[11] He has not shown what, the "pre-Semitic form of writing used in the Euphrates valley is, whether there is any convincingly sufficient resemblance between it and the Brāhmi *lipi*, and at what period approximately it was transplanted into India".[12] South Semitic itself has been considered by some scholars as the original source of the Brāhmi. It will be considered below in its proper place. But to connect the Brāhmi with the Assyrian Cuneiform is too fanciful to be seriously considered.

Semitic Origin:

Most of the scholars advocating a foreign origin for the Brāhmī script hold the Semitic characters as its parent. But they are not agreed among themselves as to what branch of the Semitics produced or influenced the Brāhmī. There are at least three sources cited for its origin: (a) phoenician, (b) South Semitic through the Sabaen of Yemen and (c) North Semitic through the Aramaean of Babylon.

Phoenician Origin:

Weber posulated the theory that the earliest Phoenician alphabet was the source from which the Brāhmī script was derived and in this he was supported by scholars like Benfey, Jenson and others.[13] They tried to prove "that about one-third of the Phoenician letters were identical with the earliest forms of the

10. *Buddhist India*, p. 114.

11. Diringer, *op. cit.*, 335.

12. D. R. Bhandarkar, 'Origin of Indian Alphabet,' *Proceedings of the First All-India Oriental Conference*, p. 311.

13. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 335; Buhler, *Indian Palaeography*, pp. 9-11.

corresponding Brāhmī signs; that another third were somewhat similar and the remaining third can be more or less harmonised." The earlier scholars objected to this theory mainly on the ground that practically all intercourse between Phoenicia and Indiac eased about 800 B.C. *i.e.*, more than five centuries before the date of the inscriptions of Aśoka. But it is very difficult to maintain this view any longer. This qnestion is closely linked up with the origins of the Phoenicians as a people. The scholars of Tyre always thought, and it was accepted by the Greek historians also, that the Phoenicians reached the east coast of the Mediterranean from the east by sea.[14] Again the Phoenician script itself is considered as a derivative of the Canaanite (North) branch of the Semitic. It also said: "It seems probable that the Phoenicians had no influence whatever on the origin of the scripts of countries lying to the east of them".[15]

South Semitic Origin:

According to Professor Deecke, Canon Isaac Taylor and in recent years Professor Sethe, the Brāhmī script descended from the South Semitic alphabet. Deecke thought that it was derived from the Assyrian Cuneiform characters through an ancient south Semitic alphabet which was also the parent of the Sabaean or Himyaritic script.[16] Taylor derived it from a lost South Semitic alphabet, the predecessor of the Sabaean.[17] He takes the ancient alphabet of Safa and Sabaea as his sources and gives a table in which the derivations are given.[18]. Among the most remarkable of his derivations may be mentioned those of the letter *va* from the Semitic *y* sound, of *gha* from the Semitic *kha*, of *j* from *ṣ* and of *c* from the deep glottal *qab*. Regarding these derivations Bühler comments as follows: "As the Hindus are very particular, even pedantic in matters connected with phonetics, and as the framers of the Brāhmī *lipi* have been careful with regard to the formation of many derivative

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14. Herodotos, II, 44.
15. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 335.
16. *Z. D. M. G.*, 31, pp. 598 ff.
17. *The Alphabet*, Vol. II, pp. 314 ff; This has been restated with some modifications by F. Muller.
18. *The Alphabet*, II, p. 320.

signs, duly deriving *dha* from *da*, *pha* from *pa*, *bha* from *ba* and so forth, it seems incredible that they should have no regard for phonetic affinities in utilising the signs they borrowed." [19]

Quite apart from the phonetic problems the very real difficulty lies in pointing out how exactly the South Semitic script could have been the parent of Brāhmī. Taylor says: "In comparing the Indian and Sabaean forms it must be borne in mind that no south Semitic inscriptions have yet been discovered of a date sufficiently remote to supply the absolute prototype of the Aśoka letters. Of the inscriptions which accident has preserved, none probably is older than the middle of the second century B.C., *a period later by about a century than the earliest Indian Inscriptions,*" (*Italics ours*) and adds that "it must therefore be remembered that it is only possible to compare sister alphabets from a common but unknown source." [20]

Bühler, who subjected the above theory to strong criticism, remarks: "Neither the sabaean alphabet, nor its perhaps a little more archaic variety, the Libyanian or Thammudaean will serve the purpose, in spite of a general resemblance in the *ductus* and of a special resemblance in two or three letters. The derivations proposed by Deecke and Taylor do not fulfil the absolutely necessary conditions, and it will probably not be possible to obtain satisfactory results, even if all the impossible equations are given up, and the oldest Indian signs in every case are chosen for comparison. It would be necessary to assume that several Sabaean letters such as *Alaph, Gimel, Zain, Teth, Phe, Qoph* and *Resh,* which show strong modifiications of the North-Semitic forms, had been again made similar to their prototypes on being converted by the Hindus into *a, ga, ja, tha, pa, kha* and *ra*. In other cases it would be impossible to show any connection between the Sabaean and the Indian signs." [21]

North Semitic Origin:

This theory deriving the Brāhmī script from the North Semitic alphabet was originally suggested in 1806 by Jones in

19. *On the Origin of the Indian Brahma Alphabet,* being the Second Revised Edn. of his *Indian Studies* No. III, (1898), p. 54.

20. *The Alphabet,* II, p. 320.

21. Buhler, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

1811 by Von Seetzen, in 1821 by Kopp, in 1834 by Lepsius and was elaborated in 1856 by Weber and by the end of the last century by Bühler.[22] They expressed the view that the Indian alphabet is in no respect an independent invention of the people of India, who, however, *elaborated to a marvellous extent* (*Italics ours*) a loan which they had received from others and said that the idea of representative vowel and consonant sounds by symbols of a pure alphabetic character was derived from Western Asia beyond any reasonable doubt.[22a] But they were not able to fix up the exact branch which could be considered as the parent for Brāhmī. It was Bühler, however, that subjected all their theories to severe criticism and finally advocated the north Semitic origin. He says: "These difficulties disappear with the derivation of the Brāhmī from the oldest North Semitic alphabet which shows the same type from Phoenicia to Mesopotamia. The few inadmissible equations which Weber's earlier attempt contains may be easily removed with the help of recently discovered forms."[23] Since then, this theory has found acceptance with many scholars and the other theories appear to have been almost discarded and not seriously considered. For instance, Diringer says: "All historical and cultural evidence is best co-ordinated by the theory which codsiders the early Aramaic alphabet as the prototype of the Brāhmī script. The acknowledged resemblance of the Brāhmī signs to the Phoenician letters also applies to the early Aramaic letters, while in my opinion there can be no doubt that of all the Semitics, the Aramaean traders were the first who came in direct communication with the Indo-Aryan merchants."[24]

But this theory of North Semitic origin of the Brāhmī script has not been accepted by some scholars, both Indian and foreign. The main arguments in favour of the Semitic origin of the Brāhmī script are:

1. The absence of the specimens of writing before the fifth century B.C. in India.
2. The resemblance between the Semitic and the Brāhmī characters and

22. *Z. D. M. G.*, Vol. X, pp. 389 ff; *Ind. Skizzen*, pp. 125 ff.
22a. See also A. H. Dani, *Indian Palaeography*, pp. 23-8.
23. Buhler, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
24. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

3. The supposed original direction of the Brāhmī from right to left.

The argument has been slightly amended as follows as a result of the excavations at a number of Harappan sites which have disclosed the earliest highly developed culture in India namely the 'Indus Valley Culture.' But it is felt that "the early Indian writing was pictographic; no alphabetic writing can be derived from pictographs; the earliest known alphabets are Semitic; hence, the Brāhmī (semi-alphabetic) could be derived only from the Semitic sources."[25]

The resemblance between the Semitic and the Brāhmī characters is the principal reason for attributing a Semitic origin to the Brāhmī.

Before proceeding further it is necessary to know something about the North Semitic alphabet. It consists of twenty-two letters or symbols, which correspond roughly to the first twenty-two letters of its descendant, the Greek alphabet. Their names as preserved in Hebrew are *'aleph, beth, gimel, daleth, he, waw, zayin, kheth, teth, yod, kaph, lamed, mem, nun, samekh, 'ayin, pe, ṣade, qoph, resh, shin, taw.*[26] Most of these names end with a consonant, though some end with a vowel. It is said that these twenty-two letters represent only eighteen sounds. It is also said that the early distinction between some letters in the North Semitic alphabet (for example between *samekh* and *shin*) was lost at a later stage. Some scholars attribute this fact to the use in later times of Aramaic in which for example *samekh* displaced *shin.*[27] It has several characters for one sound. It does not make any distinction between the long and short vowels. Even after the introduction of the vowels on account of the influence of the Greeks the consonants and the vowels of the Semitic alphabet cannot coalesce; rather the vowels are written after the consonants. Phonetically the Semitic alphabets are a jumble rather than a system. For instance, just after *a* (*alef*), which is guttural, we have *b* (*beth*) which is labial. The Semitic alphabet, it must not be forgotten,

25. Pandey, *Indian Palaeography*, Part I, p. 45.

26. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

is one of mere consonants, and originally it did not contain vowels. The Semitics could, if necessary, dispense with vowel signs. The Hebrew even now writes *k–t–b* to indicate any word having a meaning connected with 'writing,' although the word would never be read *ktb*, but *katab* (he wrote), *koteb* (he is writing), *ektob* (I shall write), and so forth, according to the sense of the sentence; whereas in an Indo-Āryan tongue, a word written with mere consonants would have many meanings or no meaning at all (*e.g.*, in English *c-t* could mean 'cat,' 'cut,' 'cot,' 'city,' 'cute,' 'act,' 'acute' or no meaning at all).[28]

In the table giving the derivation of the Brāhmī script, Bühler maintains that twenty-two letters of the Brāhmī alphabet were derived from the North Semitic alphabet some of them from early Phoenician, a few from Mesa's stone inscription and five from the 'script on the weights from Assyria.' The remaining letters of the Brāhmī were also derived from the borrowed signs by introducing certain devices.

Key to the Table of Bühler deriving the Brāhmī script from the North Semitic Alphabet.

S. No.			
1.	Aleph	a	ā
2.	Be (Beth)	ba	bha
3.	Gimel	ga	—
4.	Daleth	da	da, ḍa, ḍha
5.	He	ha	—
6.	Waw	va	u, ū, ō
7.	Zayin	ja	jha
8.	Kheth	gha	—
9.	Teth	tha	ṭa, ṭah
10.	Yod	ya	—
11.	Kaph	ka	—
12.	Lamed	la	ḷa
13.	Mem	ma	—
14.	Nun	na	ṇa, na, ña
15.	Samekh	ṣa	sa
16.	'Ayin	e	i, ī, ai
17.	Pe	pa	pha
18.	Ṣade	ca	cha
19.	Qoph	kha	—
20.	Resh	re	—
21.	Shin	śa	
22.	Taw	ta	

28. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

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An examination of the above table will show that:

1. No less than ten letters, *i.e.*, nearly half the total had to be given 'intermediate' forms as Bühler calls them; in other words they are merely hypothetical.

2. Only one Brāhmī letter *ga* may be identical with its supposed proto-type: and

3. Of the rest only five, *viz.*, *a*, *t*, *th*, *l* and *ś* may be reasonably regarded as probable derivatives and even of these the *la* has come through an intermediate form.

In additon to the above the follwing points also should be noted:

"In deriving one script from the other, even if similarities could be proved between the shapes of these two scripts evidence would still be lacking that one descended from the other, unless the likeness of the signs belonging to the two systems corresponds with the similarity or identity of their phonetic values. In this connection it may be noted that the Minoan script as well as the Cypriote syllabary contained many signs resembling the early Greek letters, but one was not derived from the other."[28a] The derivation given by Bühler in the above Table does not satisfy this general principle in many cases. His methods of derivation are difficult of acceptance; and if they are accepted, the Brāhmī characters can be derived not only from the Phoenician and the Aramaic but also from any known character of the world.

It will be seen that the following signs appearing in both the Semitic and the Brāhmī alphabets indicate different values unconnected with each other.

From	Semitic Phonetic value	Brāhmī Phonetic value
I	Zayin	ṇa
+	Tan	ka
Δ	Daleth	e (vowel)
O	'Ayin	tha
(	Lamed	pa
φ	Qoph	cha
[illegible]	Kaph	a (vowel)

28a. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

But curiously enough Bühler ignores this similarity. He derives the symbols for these Brāhmī letters from some other Semitic originals; and similarly the above Semitic alphabets have been treated as the parents of some Brāhmī letters, all of them supposedly based on the similarity in the written form.

It is generally considered that the Kharoṣṭhi script also was derived from the same North Semitic alphabet. But they present quite a different picture. For a better understanding of the problem, a perusal of the table given by Bühler showing the derivation of the Kharoṣṭhi from the North Semitic script will be necessary.

Key to the Table of Bühler deriving the Kharoṣṭhi script from the North Semitic alphabet.

S.No.	Original North Semitic	Sign borrowed for Kharoṣṭhi	Derivative
1.	Aleph	a	i, u, e, o
2.	Be (Beth)	ba	bha
3.	Gimel	ga	gha
4.	Daleth	ḍha	dha, ḍa, ḍha
5.	He	ha	—
6.	Waw	va	—
7.	Zayin	ja	jha
8.	Kheth	śa	—
9.	Teth	—	—
10.	Yod	ya	—
11.	Kaph	ka	—
12.	Lamed[29]	la	—
13.	Mem[30]	m	ṃ
14.	Nun	na	ṇa, ña
15.	Samekh	sa	—
16.	‘Ayin	—	—
17.	Pe	pa	pha
18.	Ṣade	ca	cha
19.	Qoph	kha	—
20.	Resh	ra	—
21.	Shin[31]	ṣa	—
22.	Taw	ta	tha, ṭa, ṭha

The table shows that (i) out of the twenty letters borrowed, no less than eight are identical with the Semitic forms, *viz, ca*, *da na*, *pa*, *ba*, *na*, *va* and *śa*.

(ii) nine others, *viz.*, *ka*, *kha*, *ga*, *ja*, *ma*, *ya*, *la*, *ṣa*, and *ha* may be reasonably regarded as derived from the Semitic prototypes and

(iii) there are no assumed 'intermediate' forms.

A comparison of these two tables will show that the Brāhmī script derives from twenty-two letters of the North Semitic alphabet while Kharoṣṭhi only from twenty, the two letters *Teth* and *'Ayin* having been excluded.

The derivation of the cerebrals and dentals in these two systems also deserve special notice. The Brāhmī and the Kharoṣṭhi alphabets, for both of which the same parentage is attributed by scholars, differ very much from each other. The marked characteristics of the Kharoṣṭhi script are as follows:

1. The letters are generally thin and long, more or less slanting to the right with appendages attached to their upper parts.
2. They are very irregular in shape and size and many forms are confusingly similar.
3. The script is clearly cursive.
4. There are very few looped forms.
5. The script always runs from right to left.

On the contrary the following are the chief characteristics of the Brāhmī script as given by Bühler himself:

1. The letters stand upright.
2. They are made of regular lines and loops.
3. The letters hang down unlike in Kharoṣṭhi which are top-heavy.
4. Most of the vowel signs are added at the top in the shape of horizontal lines.

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29. The original Semitic has been turned upside down.
30. The derivative represents the *anusvāra*.
31. The original Semitic has been turned upside down.

To these characteristics may be added the following:

5. The script is written from left to right[31a].

6. And finally, the script is distinctly monumental and donative.

It may be seen, thus, that "it does not appear very probable that two such fundamentally different alphabets could have been derived from the same source, especially when we bear in mind that they were both needed for the same purpose and practically for the same language too. To overcome this difficulty it has been suggested that while the Kharoṣṭhi came overland through Gandhara, the Brāhmī came by sea through Babylon *via* the Persian Gulf." A further suggestion is that one was a clerk's alphabet also used by the merchants while the other was elaborated by the learned pandits.

Comparative table of the Derivatives of the Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhi alphabets as given by Bühler.

Letter	Derivation for Kharoṣṭhi		Derivation for Brāhmī	
i ī	Derivative from	Aleph (a)	Derivative from	'Ain (e)
u ū	,,	,,	,,	Waw (o)
e	,,	,,	,,	'Ayin
ai	,,	,,	,,	'Ayin (e)
gh	,,	Gimel (g)	,,	Kheth
ṭ	,,	Taw (t)	,,	Teth (th)
ṭh	,,	,,	,,	,,
ḍ	,,	Daleth (d)	,,	Deleth (dh)
ḍh	,,	,,	,,	,,
th	,,	Taw (t)	,,	Teth
d	,,	Daleth	,,	Daleth (dh)
dh	,,	Daleth (dh)	,,	,,
ś	,,	Kheth	,,	Shin
ṣ	,,	Shin	,,	Samekh
s	,,	Samekh	,,	,, (ṣ)

31a The alleged specimens of Brāhmī writing indicating a right to left direction, the *boustrophedon* style, are discussed later on.

Scholars postulating the North Semitic source to both the Kharoṣṭhi and the Brāhmī are unable to derive the same letter in both from the same original source. In Kharoṣṭhi all the vowels were derived from the letter *aleph*, the first in the Semitic alphabet. But in the Brāhmī only the first two *i.e.*, *a* both short and long, were derived from the letter *aleph*; the vowel *e* from the deep glottal Semitic letter *'ayin* and the vowels *i*, *i* and *ai* were in turn derived from this letter *e*, while the vowels *i*, *u* and *o* were derived from the Semitic letter *waw*. Similarly the consonant *gha* of the Kharoṣṭhi was derived from the Semitic letter *gimel*, while that of the Brāhmī has been derived from the Semitic *kheth*. Further phonetically the originals and the derivations differ very much. In Sanskrit the vowel *e* is the derivative (*guṇa*) of the vowel *i*; and while it is so, to say that the letter of the vowel *i* was derived from that of *e* would certainly be not acceptable. To say that the accurate and even "pedantic" phoneticians of India evolved the Brāhmī from the Semitic in complete disregard of the phonetics clearly makes a very large demand on our credulity.

In the Kharoṣṭhi the letter *ta* was derived from the North Semitic *taw* and the letters *tha*, *ṭa* and *ṭha* were in their turn, from the original derivative *ta*. Similarly the letter *da* was derived from the North Semitic *daleth* and the *dha*, *ḍa* and *ḍha* were in their turn from the derivative *da*. Only the dental unaspirated sounds *ta* and *da* were represented in the North Semitic alphabet. Their aspirated form and the corresponding aspirated and unaspirated forms of the cerebrals as well were derived from the respective dentals. This definitely shows that there was some principle in the derivation.

In the Brāhmī also, the letter *ta* was derived from the Semitic *taw*; it had no derivative in its turn. The aspirated form of *tha* was derived from the Semitic *teth* and the corresponding aspirated and unaspirated forms of the cerebral *ṭa* and *ṭha* were in their turn obtained from the derivative *tha*. All the four letters of the Kharoṣṭhi derived from the Semitic *daleth* were derived in the Brāhmī also from the same letter. But the order was different. The aspirated form *dha* was the main derivative and the others, *da*, *ḍa* and *ḍha* were obtained from the main form *dha*. Phonetically it is anamolous and incongruous to derive the unaspirated

from the aspirated. The usual process is the reverse, *viz.* the aspirated is obtained from the unaspirated; and a perusal of the Brāhmī script will also bear out the fact. In the original Semitic both *Teth* and *Deleth* are unaspirates.

Further, from a comparison of the Brāhmī forms of the cerebrals and dentals, it would appear that the cerebrals were the main forms and that the dentals are derived from them. This will be very clear in the cases of *ṭha* and *tha*, where the difference is the addition of a dot to the former to distinguish it from the latter. This would indicate that the Semitic *teth* is a later form derived from the Brāhmī. The same will also apply to the Semitic form *'Ayin*, which has the same form as the Brāhmī *e*. Very likely these two were introduced in the Semitic through the influence of the Brāhmī. We shall then have to conclude that the Brāhmī far from deriving from the Semitic actually influenced the Semitic at least to a small extent.

Bühler recognises the following peculiarities of the Indian alphabet in his attempt to derive the Brāhmī from the North Semitic alphabet and the principles according to which the conversion took place:

1. The letters are set up as straight as possible; and with occasional exceptions in the signs of *ṭa*, *ṭha*, and *ba* they are made equal in height.

2. The majority consists of vertical lines with appendages mostly to the foot, and occasionally both at the foot and at the top, or rarely in the middle, but there is no instance in which there has been an appendage to the top alone.

3. At the top of the letters appear mostly the ends of verticals, less frequently short horizontal strokes, still more rarely curves on the tops of angles opening downwards, and quite exceptionally in *ma* and in one form of *jha* two lines rising upwards. In no case does the top show several angles placed side by side, with a vertical or slanting line hanging down, or a triangle or a circle with a pendent line."

And he deduced the principles of the derivation of the Brāhmī from the North Semitic alphabet on the basis of the following tendencies of the Indian alphabet :

1. A certain pedantic formalism.
2. A desire to frame signs suited for the formation of regular lines ; and
3. An aversion to top heavy characters.

He thinks that "the last peculiarity is probably due in part to the circumstance that since early times the Indians made their letters hang down from an imaginary or really drawn upper-line and in part to the introduction of vowel-signs most of which are attached horizontally to the tops of the consonants. Signs with the ends of verticals at the top were, of course, best suited for such a script. Owing to these inclinations and aversions of the Hindus, the heavy tops of many Semitic letters had to be got rid of by turning the signs topsy-turvy or laying them on their sides, by opening the angles, and so forth. Finally, the change in the direction of writing necessitated a further change, inasmuch as the signs had to be turned from the right to the left as in Greek."[32]

This line of argument presupposes the following factors : (1) the Indians were already using some sort of writing, (2) they were familiar with the Semitic script ; (3) their method or system of writing was defective in many ways ; (4) at the same time they found the Semitic alphabet satisfactory, though not fully representing all the required sounds of their (sic. the Indian) language and (5) they adopted the Semitic alphabet making the necessary changes and creating new symbols for the non-Semitic, but Indo-Aryan sounds. For any borrowing, whether it be language, word, or any aspect of culture or anything else by one country or nation from any other it is necessary that (1) the borrowing nation or people are quite familiar with the borrowed material ; and (2) they have realised their utility, superiority and also the necessity of such material for being borrowed. Again when any foreign material is borrowed it is adopted wholesale in the first instance and then modified gradually to suit the local require-

32. Bühler, *op. cit.*, pp. 10.11.

ments, taste or inclinations. They would not happen in a single day, but would take a long time. Thus if the Brāhmī script had been derived from the Semitic alphabet after making the necessary changes, the Semitic script also must have been in use in this country in its original form. Only after several generations of constant use the form best suited to express a particular sound evolves finally to hold the field. Thus one would naturally expect to find specimens of such writings in this country for the theory of the Semitic origin of the Brāhmī script to be true. But nothing of the kind has been found so far.

One other argument of the protagonists of the theory of the Semitic origin is that originally the direction of the Brāhmī script was from right to left. This was based on very meagre and doubtful data. At the time when Bühler wrote in his 'Indian Studies' and finally published in his *Indian Palaeography* the specimens of Brāhmī written from right to left were similar to the Brāhmī letters in the legend on the coin discovered at Eran in the Jubbalpur District considered as pre-Mauryan and assigned to the fourth century B.C.[33] He has also found a few traces in the edicts of Aśoka of the writing from right to left in the forms of some letters, in the *o* of Jaugaḍa and Dhauli versions and in the rare *dha* of Jaugada and Delhi-Sivalik versions. Again he says that in the Drāviḍī type of the Brāhmī found on the relic caskets of Bhaṭṭiprolu, the signs for the three letters, *d*, *dh* and *bh* are in the position of the writing running from right to left. According to him even the Eran coin "probably dates from the time when the Brāhmī was written both from the right to the left and from the left to the right" and that "the time when the Brāhmī was written *boustrophedon* probably lies somewhat before the Maurya period, since the Aśoka edicts show only a few traces of the writing from right to left."[34] Since then the version of the Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka at Yeṟṟaguḍi in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh has been discovered.[35] This record contains twenty three lines of writing of which eight, namely lines 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 23 are from right to left.

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33. Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, pp. 99.102.

34. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXIII, App. p. 8.

35. *Arch. Sur. of India., Ann. Rep.*, 1928.29, pp. 161-67.

Diringer, a strong supporter of the theory of Bühler, says that "there is thus sufficient evidence of the existence of an earlier Brāhmī script written from right to left, followed—as in the development of the early Greek script—by a transitional system of writing in *boustrophedon* style."[36]

However, Diringer's statement cannot be regarded as satisfactory and conclusive in deciding the question concerning the direction of writing of the original Brāhmī. Many scholars have assumed that the peculiarity or the Eran coin, as suggested by Hultzsch was due to a fault in the matrix from which the coin had been cast.[37] Hultzch thinks that it is "a mistake of the engraver of the dye, who like the die sinker in the case of a certain coin of Holkar of the last century may have forgotten that he ought to reverse the legend on the die itself." Fleet has also pointed out that "we have one instance of such remissness in ancient times in a coin of Rapla Rajuvala, the reverse of which presents a monogram formed of the Greek letters *E* and *y* facing the wrong direction.[38] Yet another is in the legend on a bronze stamp for making seals, where the engraver omitted to reverse the syllable *śū*.[39] Thus the data relied on by Bühler cannot be a sure indication of the direction of writing. That is why Hultzch and Fleet, two great authorities on Indian epigraphy, especially of South India and the Deccan, did not agree with the conclusions of Bühler.

Similarly the forms of some letters of Aśoka's edicts with a right to left direction should also be attributed to the fault of the engravers. These are not stray ones. A few other examples may be cited. In the Brāhmī label inscription of Kīḷavaḷavu, described and discussed later in the book the letters are incised upside down, thus showing that the engraver had great convenience in working from the upper part of the cave than from the front. But one of the letters in the record *ta* is found in the

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36. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

37. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 336.

38. Gardner, *Catalogue of Coins of the Greek and Scythian kings of Bactria and India*, p. 67, No. 5.

39. *J. R. A. S.*, 1901, p. 98, plate No. 9.

proper position when seen from the ground, instead of being upside down as the rest. Again the Brāhmī label record at Kuṇṇakkuḍi, also discussed elsewhere in the book, presents another peculiarity. The individual letters are incised in the reverse position, the engraver working from the upper part of the cave, thus appearing upside down when seen from the ground in front, even though the record runs from left to right when seen from the floor. Thus the record through its reflection in a mirror is seen to run from right to left. But it appears to run from left to right to the person standing on the floor only with the letters reversed and upside down.[40] Among the nearly fifty such Brāhmī labels found so far in the Tamil country this is the solitary record of the kind. This can only be taken as due to the fault or vagary or idiosyncray of the engraver and not as indicating the method of writing from right to left.

Thus the specimens so far known to us are sporadic and very few in number in comparison with the large number of contemporary inscriptions written from left to right. It is also to be noted that these irregular forms of letters appear only in the records discovered on the boundaries of the Aśokan empire. Even in the manner of writing from left to right, two methods, one proceeding clock wise and the other counter-clockwise appear to have been adopted according to the genius of the people concerned to suit their convenience. It is well known that the adoption of the later or the counter-clockwise method led to the derivation of the cursive varieties, the Vaṭṭeḻuttu and the Telugu Kannaḍa scripts. It is thus quite possible that the irregular form of some letters in the Aśoka's edicts in the transposed position was influenced by the second method.

Regarding the Yeṟṟaguḍi version of the Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka it is true that more than half of the inscription appears to be written in *boustrophedon* or alternating lines. But this style has not been followed correctly; lines 7 and 8 and also from 15 to 22 run from left to right without alternation, while lines 13 and 14 similarly run from right to left without such alternation. This only shows that the *boustrophedon* style was known here

40. See *Journal of the Madras University*, vol. xxx, No. 1. pp. 5-7 where the inscription has been edited by the author.

during the time of Aśoka. Or it may be that the scribe was merely trying a new experiment. Moreover in the lines running from right to left only the positions of letters are changed and not their forms, which shows that it is a forced and artificial way of writing and that it has no bearing on the origin of the Brāhmī script..

Such innovations are also not unknown to Indian epigraphy. The stone inscription referring to Pallava Simhavarman and incised in the Telugu-Kannḍa script of the 11-12th century A.D. at Amarāvati in the Krishna District,[41] begins at the bottom and proceeded upwards. From this instance one cannot postulate the theory that writing, at one time, commenced at the bottom and proceeded upwards at least in South India, if not in the whole country. At best these can be taken to be only due to the vagaries or the fancies of the engraver.

Thus the link discovered by Bühler in the two sets of specimens in the chain of arguments which were to prove the derivation of the Brāhmī alphabets from the Semitic alphabets which were written from right to left appears to be non-existent.

The foregoing discussion will show clearly that there are formidable difficulties in accepting the theory of the Semitic origin for the Brāhmī script designed and formed according to the phonetics and highly complicated principles of grammar. The advocates of the Semitic theory are not unaware of this. For instance, Diringer says: "We do not assume that the Brāhmī is a simple derivative of the Aramaic Alphabet. It was probably mainly the *idea* of alphabetic writing which was accepted."[42] This is only a round about way of pleading for a view that is not sustainable.

Numerals

Besides these arguments against the Semitic origin of the Brāhmī there are a few other reasons which disprove the theory. Though by themselves they are not weighty enough to explode the theory, when considered along with other arguments set forth

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41. *S. I. I.*, Vol. I. p. 25; *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 148.
42. *Op. cit.*, p. 336.

above, they strengthen the case against the acceptance of any foreign origin for the Brāhmī script.

Generally the numerals and the letters go together, and hence they are considered as the two eyes.[43] The Origin and development of the numeral forms are closely related to the origin and development of letters, and both of them are component parts of the art of writing.

The numeral forms are already found in the inscriptions of Aśoka written both in the Brāhmī and the Kharoṣṭhi scripts. But both of them differ materially. The system of numeral notation found in the Kharoṣṭhi inscriptions in India consists of fundamental signs; and all numbers are expressed by grouping them.

The fundamental signs of the Kharoṣṭhi numerals are: (a) one, two and three vertical strokes for 1, 2, and 3; (b) an inclined cross resembling the mathematical symbol of multiplication for 4; (c) a sign similar to the Kharoṣṭhi *A* for 10, (d) a double curve, looking like a cursive combination of two 10's for 20. (e) a sign resembling the Brāhmī letter *ta* or *tra* for 100 to the right of which stands a vertical stroke, where by the whole becomes equivalent to 'one hundred' (I C). (See *Bühler's Tables*, Plate I, Col. XIV for illustrations).

The numbers lying between these elements *i.e.*, the intervening numbers are expressed by groups and the additional ones are invariably placed on the left in consonance with the direction of writing running from right to left. Thus number 5 is represented by the symbols 4 and 1; 6 by 4 and 2; 8 by two 4's placed side by side; 50 by two symbols of 20 and one of 10; 60 by three of 20; 70 by three of 20 and one of 10. To express the numerals 11 to 19 and 21 to 29 etc., groups formed of the signs for 10 and 1 to 10 and 9 and 20 and 1 to 20 and 9 and so forth were used. The higher numerals beyond 100 were expressed according to the same principle. Thus 103 is formed by grouping the

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43. *Eṇṇum eḻuttum Kaṇṇeṉattagum* *(Konṟaivēndan, 7)*
Eṇ enba ēṉai eḻutteṉba ivvirandum
Kaṇ eṉba vāḻum uyiṟkku.
(Kuṟaḷ, Poruḷadikāram, Keḷvi, 2)

symbols for 100 and 3. The sign for 200 consists of the symbols for 100 preceded on the left (*i.e.*, in the direction of writing) by two vertical strokes, thus becoming II C. The number 273, *eg.*, would be written thus:

II C XX XX XX X III.

(In the Roman numerals given above the principle of diminishing applicable to the figure to the left of the basic figure (V-5, IV-4) does not apply. Thus I C will mean one hundred and one and not ninety nine).

From the few numeral signs found in the inscriptions of Aśoka at Shahbasgarhi and Mansehra (*Bühler's Table*, Col. XIII) it is found that the system of numeral notation in Kharosthi differed at least in one important point from the above. The inclined cross or multiplication symbol representing 4 is not found in them. The number 4 is expressed by four parallel vertical strokes and 5 by five such strokes.

The Kharoṣṭhi numerals have for a very long time been taken as of Semitic origin; and the latest view is that they have been borrowed from the Aramaic branch, just like the letters of the script.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the above system of numeral notation is found used in all the Semitic branches, including the prefixing of the signs for 1 and 2 to the 100; but the inclined cross or the 'multiplication' symbol used to express number 4 in the later Kharoṣṭhi inscriptions is found only in the Nabataean inscriptions incised after the beginning of the Christian era and is used there only rarely for the expression of higher units. The late occurrence of this sign both in Indian and Semitic inscriptions is significant.

The system of numeral notations in the early Brāhmī both in inscriptions and in coin legends is different. In this system numbers 1 to 3 are expressed by horizontal (not vertical as in Kharoṣṭhi) strokes or cursive combinations of such. Units 4 to 9, tens 10 to 90, 100 and 1000 each by a separate sign; the intermediate and higher numbers by groups or ligature of these fundamental signs.

For figures consisting of tens and units of hundreds and so forth, the symbols for the higher numbers are placed either unconnected to the right or vertically below the higher ones. In the inscriptions and on most coins we find the first method followed. The second is found on a few coins. This method might have been followed on account of the exigencies of space. But this principle is found adopted in the pagination of all manuscripts. To express 200 and 2000, one short stroke is added to the right of the symbol of 100 and 1000 respectively. Similarly 300 and 3000 are formed by the addition of two strokes to the same elements. Ligatures of the symbols of 100 with the signs for 4 to 9, and of 1000 with those of 4 to 7, stood respectively for 400 to 900 and 4000 to 7000 and the smaller figures placed to the right of the larger ones. (*Bühler's Tables*, Plate IX).

Regarding the origin of the Brāhmī numerals, scholars originally thought that they were of indigenous origin.[44] But Burnell thought differently. He pointed out that the general agreement of the principles of the Indian system as well as the resemblance of signs from 1 to 9 of the Brāhmī symbols correspond to those of the Demotic branch of the Egyptian writing.[45] Bayley, though accepting that the principles of the Indian system have been derived from the hieroglyphic notation of the Egyptians, tried to show that the majority of the Brāhmī symbols have been borrowed from the Phoenician, Bactrian and Akkadian figures of letters, while for a few a foreign origin is not demonstrable.[46] Bühler thinks that there are great difficulties *inter alia* by the assumption that the borrowings were from four or five different, partly very ancient and partly more modern sources; but at the same time he says that the comparative table of the Egyptian and Indian signs, and the agreement in their methods in making the hundreds, induced him to adopt with certain modifications the view of Burnell.[47] He thinks it probable that

44. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. VI, p. 143.

45. *Elements of South Indian Palaeography*, p. 65, n. 1.

46. 'Genealogy of the Modern Numerals' *J. R. A. S. (NS)*., Vol. 14. pp. 335 ff; 15, pp. 1 ff.

47. *Ind. Ant.*, Vol, XVI, p. 35.

the Brāhmī numeral symbols are derived from the Egyptian Hieratic figures.[48] But he himself remarks that this derivation however still presents difficulties and cannot be called certain. He is also aware that the varying forms in the Aśokan edicts show these movements to have had a longer history before the third century B.C.

If the origin of the letters and the numerals of the Brāhmī is traced to some foreign source one would naturally expect that both of them are traced to the same foreign source as in the case of Kharoṣṭhi. But the letters have been taken as the derivatives of the North Semitic and the numerals of the Egyptian.

This complicated and incompatible position is evidently the result of a thoroughly wrong approach to the problem from the very beginning. The numeral symbols were taken as the letters, usually a *matrika* or a ligature, with phonetic values of such symbols and find an explanation for the use of such letters. And in this scholars were rather influenced by the analogy of the Semitic scripts.

In the Semitic scripts, the individual letters have numerical values also in addition to the phonetic ones. Of the twenty-two original letters of the script, the first ten bear the values from 1 to 110 and then the next nine letters by tens from 20 upto 100, and the last three letters by hundreds upto 400. Later on six more letters were added by the Arabs and the letter numerals were upto 1000. These numerical values of the letters, given by the famous Arabic mnemonic commencing with *abjad* etc., is retained in almost all branches, derived from the Semitic. In Arabic and Persian these letter numerals are used chiefly to record the dates of events.

It is true that this method of indicating the numbers with certain letters assigning them numerical values is found in India also. There are three such systems, and not a single method as in the Semitic, and in each of them the numeral value attached to individual letters is different. But none of these three resembles the Semitic system in any way.

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48. See *ante*, p. 65.

The three Indian system of letter-numerals are the *kaṭapa-yadi*, *bharakhaḍi* or *siddhamatrika* and the *akṣarappaḷḷi*.

The *khaṭapayadi* is the system in which each of the consonant letters of the Sanskrit alphabet beginning with *ka, ṭa, pa* and *ya* is assigned the numeral value consecutively from 1 to 9 and 0. This is found used both in inscriptions and in literary works to record the dates of events when such portions of the compositions are in verse form. This is not generally used when the composition is in prose.[49]

The *siddhamatrika* or *bharakaḍi*, also known as the *dvadaśakṣari*, is the system in which each of the vowels is assigned the number consecutively from 1 to 12. This is found used only in the pagination of manuscripts. There are also some other forms of this system.

The third, *akṣarappaḷḷi* is now thought to designate the system in which certain specified letters are used to denote the numerals. Dr. Bühler has collected such letters from various sources and given them in a tabulated form.[50] It will be seen there from that the phonetic values of these signs are not constant and vary considerably and also that such phonetic values of the signs often differ from those in the manuscripts. He himself admits that (a) the inscriptions of all the periods, even the Aśokan edicts in the case of the number 100, differ from the manuscripts by offering side by side with distinct letters numerous cursive or intentionally modified forms and that in no real *akṣaras*; (b) excepting 7, 9, 30, 40, 80 and 90 the phonetic value of the letters varied since the earliest times, and in many cases the variations were very considerable as in the case of 6,10,60, 70,100 and 1000; (c) occasionally, as in the case of 10, 60 and 70, the distinct letters used in the later inscriptions and the manuscripts varied in different ways from cursive signs without a phonetic value.

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49. See T. N. Subrahmanyan, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, Pt. i, pp. 243—44.

50. Plate IX, i—xviii, cols. xix, xxvi; and also text in *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXXIII, Appendix, pp. 78.81.

This system has been in use even in South India; and the letters used to denote the numerals from 1 to 10 are as follows: *na, nna, nya, ṣra, jhra, ha, gra, pra, dra,* and *ma* respectively. To express 11 they write letters *ma* and *na* as *mana*. There are also separate letters for every ten from twenty to ninety and for hundred and thousand like the numeral signs. This system is however not now in use in the Tamil country, though occasionally used in Kerala in numbering the leaves of manuscripts. The sheets of the Vēḷvikkuḍi grant are numbered in this way. The numeral 1 of the former has letter *na* while that of the latter has *ṇa*. When compared with those of the Maṭṭepāḍu plates of Dāmodaravarman of the family known as the Ānanda gotra (circa 4th century A.D.) it will become evident that these are the out come of an independent evolution of the numerals of the cave inscriptions like many others and that they are not mere letters.

The scholars who postulated the above proposition did not explain why only certain letters, of which many were ligatures, should be chosen for the purpose. If this theory were correct, then the letter values of the numerals should be uniform. But this is not so. In North India the number 4 is represented by the letter *nka* while in the South it is shown by the letter *ṣkra*. Similarly for 9 the letter *o* is used in the North while *dra* is used in the South. Thus these letters having the numeral values differ from region to region. But when written in the scripts of the different regions, the forms for the particular numerals are very similar to such letters.

Very likely the position seems to have been as follows: Originally the numerals were not represented by certain letters by assigning numerical values to them. But when numerals had to be expressed by the authors of literary compositions in the middle of verses, they resorted to different ways, sometimes the letter having the form approximately nearest to the numeral. This is best illustrated by the verse in Tamil attributed to the poet Kaḷamēgha, wherein he addresses a person: எட்டேகால் லக்ஷணமே (*eṭṭēkāl lakṣaṇamē*) instead of *avalakṣaṇa* or ugly, as in the Tamil numerals eight has the shape of the vowel letter *a* and the quarter is denoted by the letter *va*. (It may also be noted in this connection that in Tantric and astronomical works, the

Sun is represented by the letter *tha*. In Brāhmī this letter had the form of a circle with a dot inside. This is the well-known symbol denoting the Sun all the world over). This is how Malayagiri, the Jaina commentator of the 11th century A.D. denoted the numeral 4 as *nika-śabda* (the word or symbol having the sound *nika—Ind., Ant.*, vol. VI, p. 47). Most probably this form as *akṣarapaḷḷi* is a later creation.

Thus it will be evident, that the numerals of the Brāhmī script have nothing in common with the numerals of the scripts of Semitic origin and have, had an independent origin and evolution in this country. This is confirmed by the reference in the Vedic literature to very high figures of written arithmetic (further below)."[51]

The above discussion leads us to the only remaining alternative, *viz.*, that the Brāhmī script was of indigenous growth. This theory was first suggested by Lassen and later was strongly upheld by General Cunningham and a few other scholars and epigraphists. But subsequently no serious view was taken of it particularly after Bühler put forward his theory that the script was of North Semitic origin. After him many scholars held the opinion that Egypt, Sumeria and Babylon which were the homeland of ancient civilizations gave the script to India. But since the discovery of the 'Indus Valley Civilization' in the third decade of the present century the theory of indigenous origin has again received some attention among a section of scholars, the script being connected by a few with the 'Indus Valley Civilization' itself.

Even among the scholars advocating an indigenous origin for the Brāhmī script there is no agreement among them about the authors of the invention, some ascribing it to the Dravidians and some others to the Aryans.

Aryan or Vedic Origin:

As mentioned earlier this theory was first suggested by Lassen[52] and later on upheld by General Cunningham.[53] They held the view that the Aryan priests developed the Brāhmī

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51. See. *Supra* Chapter III.

52. *Indische Alter thumskunde*, II Edn. (1867), Vol. I, p. 1006.

53. *C. I. I.*, Vol. I, *Inscriptions of Aśoka* p. 52; Dowson, *J. R. A. S.*, 1881, p. 102; also *I. A.* Vol. XXXV, p. 253.

alphabet from indigenous Indian hieroglyphics. The arguments they advanced in support of their view were, however, weak. Cunningham for example argued that the Brāhmi *va* (𑀯) might originally have been a hieroglyph for *viṇa* (lute) or *vāhu* (arm) or *vindu* (drop),[54] and that the letter *ta* (𑀢) might have represented *tan* (to spread) or *tala* (the palm tree) or *taraṅga* (wave) or *tri* (three). "Such an elastic method." Taylor very rightly remarks "may establish anything or nothing." Bühler observes "Cunningham's opinion, which was formerly shared by some prominent scholars presupposes the use of Indian hieroglyphic pictures of which hitherto no trace has been found."[55] It may even be mentioned that these crude attempts, combined with the absence of all positive evidence in the shape of pre-Aśokan inscriptions, were mainly responsible in finding support for the Semitic theory. The discovery of the 'Indus Valley' script has however considerably weakened the objections put forward by Bühler. Since then various scholars[56] have tackled the problem from various angles. But each has attempted it from one angle or standpoint only.

R. Shama Sastri propounded a theory according to which the Brāhmī characters were derived from various signs and symbols representing *devas* (deities) and called *devanagar* (the city of Gods).[57] The greatest weakness of this theory is that all the evidences produced by him are from the Tantric texts of a very late date, which have no bearing on the problem under discussion.

Dravidian Origin:

Edward Thomas[58] and other scholars of his way of thinking maintained that the Dravidians were responsible for the invention

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54. The forms of the latter two are incorrect dialectical variations, the correct ones being *bāhu* and *bindu*.

55. *Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII, App. p. 9.

56. See, for instance, Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, *Proceedings of the First All-India Oriental Conference*, pp. 305-318; I. J. S. Taraporewala, *Proceedings of the Fourth All-India Oriental Conference*, pp. 625.61. R. B. Pandey, *Indian Palaeography*, pt. I, p. 35.

57. *Ind. Ant.*, XXXV, pp. 253-67; 270.90; 311.24.

58. *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1883, No. III.

of the Brāhmī characters which were borrowed by the Aryans. It is assumed that before the Aryans came to India the Dravidians occupied the entire land, and they being culturally more advanced than the Aryans, invented the art of writing. This theory is sometimes objected to on the following lines. One is that the original habitat of the Dravidians was in the South while the Aryans were in Northern India ; and the earliest specimens of writing are found in Northern India and not in the South. Moreover it has been argued that the purest representative of the Dravidian languages, Tamil has only the first and fifth letters of a *varga* (class) whereas the Brāhmī has all the five letters of a *varga*. "Phonetically the poor Tamil characters obviously seem to have been borrowed from the phonetically commodious Brāhmī characters."[59]

The Dravidian theory has again been advocated by T. N. Subrahmanyan. This theory which was hinted at by him more than twenty five years ago in his Tamil publication, *Paṇḍaṭṭamiḻ Eḻuttukkaḷ* (பண்டைத் தமிழ் எழுத்துக்கள், 1938), has been elaborated by him in his 'The Tamil Palaeography' published as an appendix to his *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, Pt. ii (1957).

At the time when the theory of an indigenous origin for the Brāhmī script was proposed, the following three important objections were advanced against such a view :

1. A fully developed and an almost perfect alphabet like the Brāhmī is impossible without long preceding years of growth. No such evidence is available.

2. The practical uniformity of the Brāhmī script in the inscriptions of Aśoka clearly points to the absence of variety in the script. If it had been indigenous, its origin must be taken back to quite a hoary antiquity and in that case we might naturally expect quite a large variety of scripts in those days. This also is absent.

3. The Brāhmī script falls into groups based on the written forms of the letters and this will show that in certain letters which have been obviously derived from others,

59. R. B. Pandey, *op. cit.*, I, p. 35.

> these derivations represent sounds which had no original forms. This will clearly show that the script was borrowed from one which had no letters representing such sounds and that additional forms had to be invented to write them.

Of these the first two objections can no longer be maintained. It is true that at the time when the above proposition was first put forward, no writing earlier than the Brāhmī records of Aśoka was found in the country. But since then the discovery of Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Rupar, Lothal and other sites of the 'Indus Valley Civilization' has brought to light numerous seals and other objects with pictographs. K. P. Jayaswal even claimed a connecting link between the pictographic scripts of the Indus Valley and the Brāhmī.[60] Some of the pictographic evidences, survivals of which are found in a few caves in India and the importance of which was minimised even by scholars like Bühler add strength to the theory now.[60a] Further references to pictographs and sound signs are found in early Tamil literature. Taking these into account it becomes obvious that the first objection cannot be maintained any longer.

As regards the second objection, it has been pointed out earlier that even in the days of Aśoka there had been several varieties of the Brāhmī script. The alphabet of the edicts is not homogeneous. "All the letters with the exception of *re, jha, ña, ña, ṭha, ṇa, ṭha,* and *ṅa* have often very dissimilar forms, which are partly local and partly cursive varieties. The number of varieties in one letter sometimes amounts to nine or ten." These varieties fall into two distinctive groups, the northern and the southern. The existence of several kinds of scripts in the country in the early days is also known to us from literature. It may be that inscriptions in those varieties have not been recovered yet. But we have records found at Bhaṭṭiprolu which are generally taken to be of the Drāviḍi type. In this connection it may be noted that we have not so far traced any record of antiquity earlier than the seventh century A.D. (excepting the Brāhmī records of the pre-Christian era discussed further and the

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60. *Ind. Ant.*, XLII, p. 203.

60a. See Appendix to Chapter I.

Tirunātharkuṉṟu epitaphs) in the Tamil country. But this does not mean that writing was then unknown in the southern part of the country. It is possible that such records have been lost owing to some reason or other or they are hidden somewhere awaiting discovery.

Diringer wants the "Indian scholars who patriotically consider the Brāhmī as the descendant of an indigenous pre-historic script" to be reminded for the following facts:

1. "The existence in the same country of two or more successive scripts does not prove that one depends on the other; for instance the early Greek alphabets employed in Crete did not descend from the early Cretan or Minoan script.

2. Even if similarities could be proved between the shapes of the Indus Valley characters and those of the Brāhmī letters, evidence would still be lacking that the latter descended from the former, unless the likeness of the signs belonging to the two systems corresponds with the identity of their phonetic values.

3. The Indus valley writing was presumably a transitional system or a mixed syllabic-ideographic script, while the Brāhmī script was a semi-alphabet. As far as we know, no syllabic-ideographic script became alphabetic without the influence of another alphabetic script......No serious scholar has even tried show how the Indus Valley ideographic script could have developed into the Brāhmī semi-alphabetic writing.

4. The extensive Vedic literature gives no indication of the existence of writing in early Aryan India...Writing is never mentioned. Among the ancient Indian divinities there was no God of writing, but there was Sarasvatī the Goddess of knowledge, learning and eloquence.

5. Only the Buddhist literature gives clear references to writing in ancient times.

6. ... ...on epigraphic grounds alone it is supposed that the Brāhmī script existed in the sixth century B.C,

7. According to the great authorities on the subject... ... the period 800 to 600 B.C., in India shows a remarkable advance in industrial life.........This period coincided with the development of maritime commerce......from ports on the South-west coast of India......to Babylon. It is generally argued that the development of commerce favoured the diffusion of a knowledge of writing.

8. Very little is known about [the early Aryan history of India. The fantastic theories such as that of Mr. Tilak, who attributed the earliest hymns of the Vedic literature to about 7000 B.C. or that of Shankar Balakrishna Dikshit who attributed certain Brāhmaṇas to 3800 B.C. cannot be taken seriously. The immigration of Aryan tribes into India is now attributed to the second half of the second millennium B.C., and the entire Vedic literature is attributed to the same period continuing into the early part of the first millennium B.C.

9. In the sixth century B.C., northern India witnessed a remarkable religious revolution which profoundly infleunced the course of Indian history. There is no doubt that while the knowledge of writing may have favoured the diffusion of Jainism and Buddhism, these two religions, and especially the latter, contributed much to the diffusion of the knowledge of writing.

10. On the whole many different lines of evidence suggest a date between the eighth and the sixth centuries B.C. for the introduction of writing into 'Aryan India.'"[61]

These reminders are based largely on the presumption that the origin of the Brāhmī script is not indigenous. Still they deserve careful consideration. As R. B. Pandey rightly says the first two of them "are at best prudentials."[62] If there are successive scripts in a country it stands to reason to think that the latter is derived from the former unless it is conclusively proved otherwise. It is well known that the imposition of a new

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61. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 328.34.

62. *Indian Palaeography*, p. 38.

script, when, there is already one in use, takes place on account of the political domination of the people with the new script over the people who adopt the new one. Or it should be due to strong economic domination which could not be easily shaken off. For the view that the Brāhmī is derived from the Semitic script there is no evidence to show that at any time in the ancient history of India it was under the domination of the Semitics. On the other hand it may be true to some extent it was in the opposite way. The second point raised by Diringer is only hypothetical as we do not know the phonetic values of the individual characters of the Indus Valley script which may or may not agree with the value of the Brāhmī script. As regards the third also we still do not know if the Indus Velley script has any phonetic value in it. Further it has been stated that importance should be given not to the invention of signs, but to the establishment of an alphabetic system of writing. It must be noted that the Semitic writing is not an alphabetic system. It is consonantal with no vowels, the want of which makes it quite imperfect. This want was supplied only by the Greeks. Further the arrangement is a jumble in complete disregard of phonetic considerations.

The fourth reminder is not based upon a proper appraisal of the value of the Vedic literature for a consideration of the question. This has been discussed in detail earlier. The statements that there was no God of writing, and that Sarasvatī was only the Goddess of knowledge, learning and eloquence are not correct. We have seen earlier that Brahmā has been regarded as the inventor of writing and the images of both Brahmā and his counter-female part Sarasvatī have each a book in one of their hands. The fifth reminder is not based on a proper evaluation of the back-ground of Buddhist literature which is supplied by the Vedāṅgas and the early Vedic literature. The sixth is after all a negative evidence. It can refer only to the monumental survivals and does not take into account the possibility of perishable materials being used for writing in ancient times. The seventh reminder is very inconclusive. The commercial contact between India and West Asia does not necessarily prove that the former was the borrower. It may as well be just the opposite. The eighth reminder tries to show that Indian (Aryan) civilization is comparatively younger when compared with the civilization of Western Asia. Though the theories of B.G. Tilak and S.B. Dikshit

for the beginnings of the Aryan Civilization may not be acceptable to all, almost all scholars are agreed on the fact that they may be assigned to the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Regarding the ninth point, there is no denying the fact that both Jainism and Buddhism popularised the use of the Prākṛts and the use of writing. But as said earlier the two religions presuppose the use of writing even in earlier times for the Vedic language. It may be noted that the Buddha prohibited his disciples from writing his dialogues in *Chandas*. There is not much force in the last argument since it presumes that the origin of writing is non-Aryan, without showing any evidence.

Thus the ten reminders of Diringer do not make out a substantial case for negativing the possibility of the derivation of the Brāhmī script from some indigenous pre-existing system of writing in the country.[62a]

Bühler, the strongest advocate of the theory of a North Semitic origin for the Brāhmī script, while realising the phonetic and grammatical nature of the alphabet says: "Nevertheless, the oldest known forms of the Brāhmī, without a doubt, was a script framed by learned Brahmins for writing Sanskrit. This assertion is borne out not only by the remnants of the Gayā alphabet of Aśoka's stone masons which must have contained signs for the Sanskrit vowels *AI* and *AU* and which is arranged according to phonetic principles, but also by the influence of phonetic and grammatical principles which is clearly discernible in the formation of the derivative sign. The hand of the phonologist and grammarian is recognisable in the following points :

1. the development of five nasal letters and of a sign for nasalisation ...., as well as a complete set of signs for the long vowels.

2. the derivation of the signs for the phonetically very different, but grammatically cognate *sa* and *ṣa*.

3. the notation of *U* by the half of *va* from which the vowel is frequently derived by *samprasāraṇa*.

62a. In the above discussion I have largely followed R. B. Pandey.

4. the derivation of *O* from *U* .... by the addition of a stroke ....

5. the non-expression of medial *a* in accordance with the teachings of the grammarians who consider it inherent in every consonant ....

All this has so learned an appearance and is so ·rtificial that it could only have been invented by pandits, not by traders and clerks." [63]

The main characteristics of the Brāhmī alphabet may be stated as follows:

1. The Brāhmī alphabet contains independent and clear symbols for almost every pronounced sound.
2. There is identity between pronounced sounds and written alphabets.
3. The alphabet has the most exhaustive symbols for vowels and consonants, numbering as many sixty-four.
4. There are different signs for short and long vowels (with the exception of *e* and *o* which are found in the Prākṛt and the Dravidian language.)
5. There are signs for *anusvāra* (nasal sound = ं) *anunāsika* (nasal sound = ँ) and *visarga* (a sort of hard breathing (= :).
6. The alphabets are phonetically classified according to the places of pronunciation.
7. Vowels and consonants are combined with the help of medial signs.[64]

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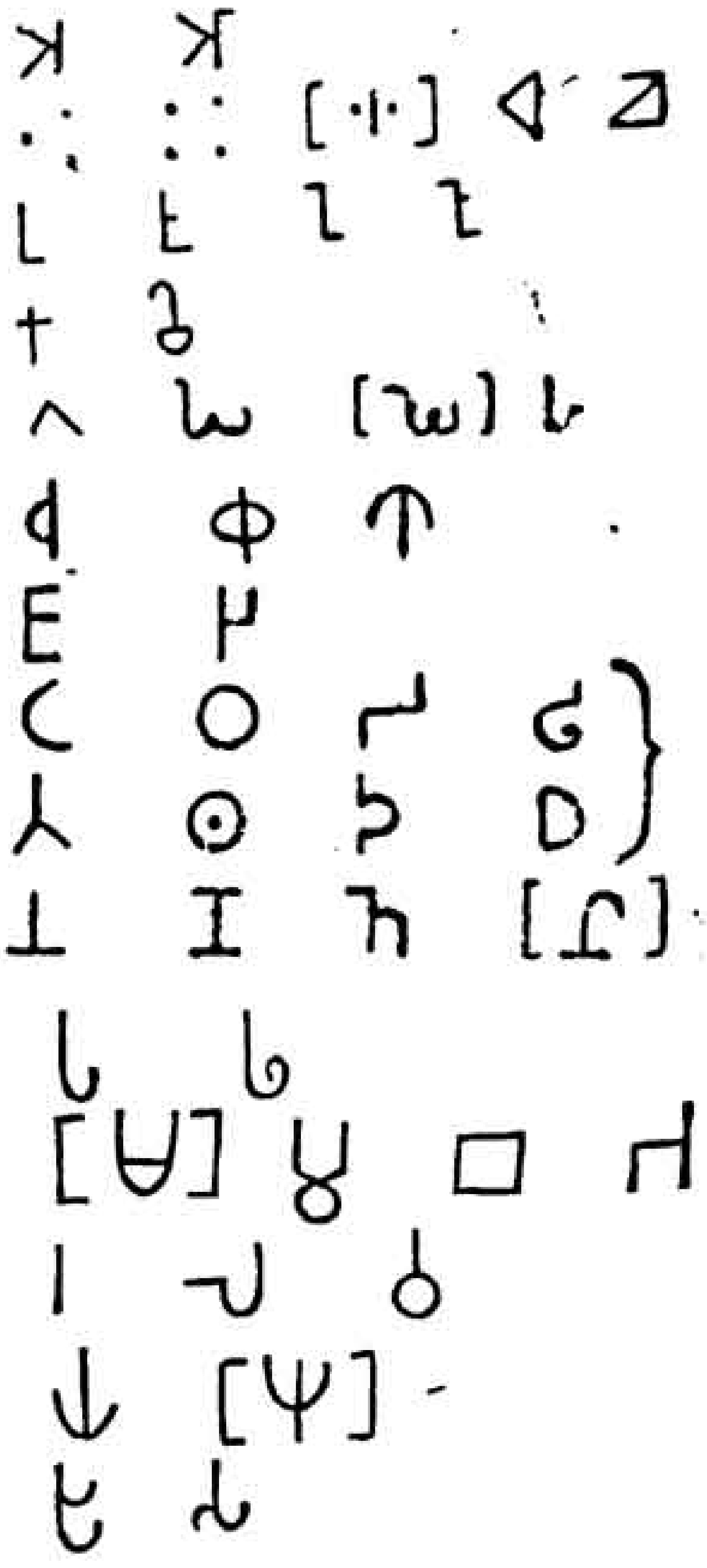
63. *Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII, app. p. 17.

64. R. B. Pandey, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

In accordance with the written forms the Brahmi scripts may be conveniently grouped as follows:



a ā

i ī [ī] e ai

u ū ō au

ka kha

ga gha [gha] ha

ca cha śa

ja jha

ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha

ta tha da dha

na ṇa ña ṅa [ṉa]

pa pha

[ma] ma ba bha

ra ḷa va

ya [ai]

ṣa sa[65]

[Adapted from the article 'The Origin of the Brahmi Alphabet' by T. J. S. Taraporewala in the *Proceedings of the Fourth All-India Oriental Conference, Allahabad*, 1928, p. 644.]

A careful study of the above will bring out the following characteristics of the script.

1. The short and long vowels are obviously connected, the long ones being formed with the addition of a symbol to the short ones.

65. The signs within square brackets indicate those found mostly in South India or in the Draviḍi type.

2. Of the vowels only *a*, *i* and *u*, are the primary ones; the *guṇa* vowels *e* and *o* are obtained from the corresponding primary ones, *i* and *u* respectively.

3. The *vṛddhi* vowel *ai*, though obtained from the *guṇa* vowel *e* in the northern variety, appears to be connected with the corresponding consonant *ya* in the south; similarly the *vṛddhi* vowel *au* appears to be connected with the *guṇa* vowel *o*.

4. The aspirated form of the consonants are derivable from the corresponding unaspirated ones. It may even be said that the *varga* letters have been derived from the primary ones.

5. The cerebrals and dentals are closely connected with each other. In the case of *ṭha* and *tha*, the only difference is the addition of a dot in the centre of the former, to indicate the latter.

6. The nasals are all obviously connected.

The above will show that the Brāhmī script was designed not for the Sanskrit language but for a language having the following peculiarities:

1. Among the vowels only the three *viz.*, *a*, *i* and *u* were the primary ones.

2. Among the hard consonants only the primary or the first ones remained and the *varga* letters were absent.

3. Again there was no difference between the cerebrals and dentals and it had only one in the place of both of them and very likely the cerebrals were more prominent, while the dentals were not in use.

When later on the script was adopted for the Sanskrit and its allied languages, special forms had to be invented for the additional sounds.

Among the Indian languages (both classical and modern) these characteristics are the special features of the Prākṛt.

Before proceeding further with the question of determining the particular language for which the Brāhmī script was designed

it is necessary to know about the language in which the earliest Brāhmī inscriptions are written. The Aśokan records which are the earliest are in the Prākṛt language. In fact all the early inscriptions recovered so far are all in Prākṛt. Sanskrit appears to have taken its place in the first or second century A. D. in the north western parts of India and later gradually in other areas. Even then Prākṛt lingered on for sometime, and its influence was clearly perceptible in early Sanskrit inscriptions. It finally disappeared from about the fourth century A. D. The very fact that Prākṛt was employed for writing inscriptions even in South India, as evidenced by the Aśokan edicts at Mäski, Siddhāpura, Brahmagiri, Yeṟṟaguḍi and Rājula Mandagiri, the early characters of the Pallavas of Kāñcī and others would clearly show that Prākṛt was the official language of the administration in those days.

The Jaina work *Paṇṇāvaṇā-sutta*, referred to earlier, divides the Aryas into nine classes, the sixth of whom were the *bhāṣāriya* 'Aryans by language,'. It is said of them: "They are Aryan by language, who speak the Ardhamāgadhi language (the Prākṛt in which Mahāvīra is said to have preached the Jaina religion) and with whom the Brāhmī script is customary."[66] This implies that the Prākṛt was written in the Brāhmī script.

Thus the specific characteristics of the Brāhmī script would show that it was designed for the Prākṛt language.

T. N. Subrahmanyan thinks that the special features of the language for which the Brāhmī script should have been designed are found only in Tamil and hence the script should have been designed only for that language. He is alive to the fact that the earliest inscriptions are all in Prākṛt which was the official language in those days. He also notes the following as some of the more important features of the Prākṛt language.

1. Prākṛt is a simple language with a simple grammar and could be understood by all.

2. It has only the singular and the plural as in Tamil (with no dual as in Sanskrit).

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66. Pischel, *Prākṛt Grammar*: Introduction. Tr. into English by Balakrishna Ghosh, *Indian Culture*, Vol. II (1935-36), p. 474.

3. Among the vowels *ṛ*, *ḷ* as also *ai* and *au* are absent. In the cases of *e* and *o*, they have both the short and long forms.

4. Of the consonants, *śa* and *ṣa* are not generally used and only *sa* takes their places.

5. The Dravidian *ḷa* is also found.

He says: "The special features of the Prākṛt languages we have noticed above are found in the Tamil language and these also satisfy the peculiarities of the language for which the Brāhmī script was designed. Probably, the Prākṛt in its original form was a South Indian product, synthesising the Dravidian language to make it understood throughout the country."[67] In his opinion the Brāhmī script was originally designed for the Dravidian language and later on adapted for Prākṛt which was evolved as a common language which was more close to the Dravidian.[68]

This is a rather sweeping statement. Our knowledge of Prākṛt is still comparatively very limited. Though it was the official language of the administration in the country for at least four or five centuries, and has had a rich literature, the extant literature in the language is not much, excluding the religious literature of the Buddhists and the Jainas (which are in some varieties of the Prākṛt) and the *Sattasai* (which is in what is called the Mahārāṣṭrian Prākṛt) The remaining literature in that language is not old. It should be assigned to different perids when Prākṛt had yielded its place to Sanskrit and had ceased to be the official language. All of them bear traces of Sanskritic influence. The extant grammars of the Prākṛt language are in Sanskrit and contain elaborate rules for purposes of Prākṛtising Sanskrit, thus making it an artificial and degenerate language. As it is impossible to assess the influence of Sanskrit in the manuscript materials and the published texts of the extant Prākṛt literature we have to take only the texts of the Prākṛt inscriptions as they are free from the manipulations of later scribes and would be able to clearly

67. *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, Pt. II, p. 1607.

68. *Ibid.*

indicate the extent of Sanskrit influence at the time when the records were incised.

As said earlier the early inscriptions are all in the Prākṛt language which continued to be employed in the royal charters upto the fourth century A.D. The language would thus have attained a high level or degree of perfection in its diction and expression. Further the royal charters would have been composed in clear, precise and unambiguous terms, thus being not difficult of interpretation. Still much difficulty is experienced by scholars in their interpretation. For instance, a copper-plate inscription of just four lines of writing in the Brāhmī characters of about the fourth or third century B.C. recovered from Sohgaura in Uttar Pradesh [69] has been interpreted differently by Bühler,[70] Fleet,[71] Barua,[72] Jayaswal [73] and D.C. Sircar.[74] This would show that the language gives much difficulty with regard to its interpretation at any rate in respect of the inscriptions. The extant Prākṛt grammars do not explain all the peculiarities of inscriptional Prākṛt.

There are many Dravidian forms and usages in the Prākṛt inscriptions; and this aspect has not been studied seriously so far. Further the Mahārāṣṭri Prākṛt, the southern most of the regional varieties in it, is considered the Prākṛt *par excellence*.[75] It is also true that there are many similarities between Tamil and Prākṛt and that the Dravidian languages, Tamil, Telugu, Kannaḍa etc. have long been known as Prākṛt.

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69. *J. R. A. S.*, 1907, pp. 510—32.

70. *Ind. Ant.*, XXV, (1896) p. 261.

71. *J.R.A.S.*, 1907, pp. 510. ff.

72. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, XI, p. 32 ff; *Ind. Hist. Quarterly*, X, pp 510. ff.

73. *Ep. Ind.*, XXII, p. 2.

74. *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I, p. 85 *n*.

75. Mahendale has studied the Prākṛt of the inscriptions in his *Grammar of the Inscriptional Prakṛt* but the treatment follows closely the pattern of the Prākṛt grammar as written in Sanskrit from the standpoint of a Sanskritist. The influence of the Dravidian languages, if any, on the Prākṛt and the indebtedness of one to the other has not received the attention that they require.

But with the materials now available and the imperfect condition of our knowledge of Prākṛt it is not possible to assert the Prākṛt was a South Indian product, synthesising the Dravidian language to make it understood throughout the country. It is not necessary to discuss here the merits of the statement, as it is beyond the scope of the subject of the present enquiry. Suffice it to say that with the present available material it is too hazardous to put forth such a proposition.

Whatever that may be, there are two strong objections against the theory that the Brāhmī script should have been originally designed for the Dravidian language and later on adapted for the Prākṛt.

i. The first is the absence of special symbols for the short *e* and *o* which are considered peculiar to the Dravidian languages. Of the five vowels *a, i, u, e,* and *o* which have both the short and long in Tamil, the basic forms of the first three are taken as indicating the short and an additional symbol by way of horizontal line to the right is added to the forms of *a* and *u*, while another dot is added to the form of *i*. This is the same in the northern variety. For the last (other) two *viz.*, *e* and *o*, the basic form is taken as indicating the long and a dot is added to indicate the short.[76] Sanskrit and its allied

76. Of course Prākṛt has both short and long for the two vowels; but only the long ones are met with in the inscriptions, and short ones have not been recovered so far.

The use of *e* and *o*, long and short in Tamil, according to the *Tolkappiyam* has been noticed earlier. The addition of a dot to indicate short in the letters *e* and *o*, though not regularly employed in later inscriptions, is found used in the earlier ones not only for the initial vowels, but also for medial ones. *cf.* for instance Vēḷvikkuḍi grant of the Pāṇḍya king Parāntaka Neduñjaḍaiyan (*Ep. Ind.*, XVII, p. 291) and the S'endalai inscription of the Muttaṛaiya chieftain Perimbiḍugu Muttaraiyan *alias* S'ūran Māṛan (*Ibid.*, XIII, p 135).

It is interesting to note in this connection that in the Drāviḍi type of the Brāhmi employed in the Bhaṭṭiprōlu relic caskets and in the labal inscriptions in the Tamil country, to avoid the confusion likely to be caused by the addition of dots to the consonants which in the Sanskrit records would indicate the *anusvāra* and the pure consonant in Tamil, it was devised that the simple form of the consonant would indicate the pure consonant without the inherent *a* (as in the Sanskritic usage and the *Tolkāppiyam* discussed above)

languages have only *e* and *o* always indicating long with no short. When the general principle adopted was to derive the long from the short by the addition of a symbol, here quite the opposite method has been employed in deriving the short from the long. Later on when it was felt necessary to distinguish or differentiate them, the forms then obtaining for the vowels *e* and *o*, both for the initial and the medial ones were retained as short and special forms were devised for the long, making slight alterations in the existing forms considered as short ones. This is also in conformity with the general principle noted above. As such the special form created for the short in Tamil according to the *Tolkāppiyam* shows clearly that the Brāhmī script which had only one form for these two vowels, *e* and *o*, which always indicated the long ones could not have been designed for the Tamil language.

ii. The Brāhmī signs for the two *vṛddhi* (diphthong) vowels *ai* and *au* were derivatives from those of the *guṇa* vowels *e* and *o* respectively, which in their turn were derived from the primary vowels *i* and *u*.[77] This is quite in accordance or conformity with Sanskrit grammar. The Prākṛt languages do not have *ai* and *au*; and these vowels are also not used in the Prākṛt inscriptions. But the position is quite different in Tamil. As said earlier, according to the *Tolkāppiyam*, the Tamil vowel *ai* is made up of the two vowels *a* and *i*; and *au* made up of the two *a* and *u*. Further the vowel *a* with the pure consonant *y i.e. ay* may also be used for *ai*. The commentators say that similarly *av* (*i.e.* the vowel *a* and the pure consonant *v*) may be

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and that one or two horizontal strokes were added at the top to the right of the letter to indicate short *a* and long *ā* respectively of the vowel-consonants. But no such special device appears to have been made with regard to *e* and *o*. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says that in the case of the combined consonants the occurrence of short *e* and short *o* (in the Brāhmi inscriptions of the Tamil country) deserves particular attention, the two being the special characteristics of the Dravidian alphabet. (*Proceedings of the Third All.India Oriental Conference*, Madras, 1924, p. 283).

But it has not been possible to make out this difference between the short and long of the two vowels *e* and *o* in the photograph of the records.

77. *akara ikaram aikāram ākum* and *akara ukaran aukāram ākum*. (Sūtras 54 and 55.)

used for *au.*[78] The alternative form for the vowel *ai* found in the Brāhmī inscriptions of South India (ψ) which is closely connected with the linear form of *ya* was probably influenced by the above principle. No such symbol has so far been traced for the vowel *au*. But the standard forms in the standard Brāhmī are those found in North India. The southern symbol for *ai* appears to have been a later invention. If it had been the original form certainly this would have been used instead of inventing a new one with the addition of a horizontal stroke at the top to the left of the symbol *e*. This also shows that the Brāhmī could not have been devised for Tamil.

T. N. Subrahmanyan is aware of this difficulty; and he takes note of the first of the above two. But he explains it as follows: "Later on Sanskrit elements were introduced to suit the needs of the new letters, and in the course of this process, some symbols not required for the Sanskritised Prākṛt got eliminated. And finally when it became the official language it spread throughout the length and breadth of the country with royal authority behind, and displaced the then existing varieties of the script. It should be noted side by side that no inscription in the other co-existing scripts has been found."[78a] This is purely hypothetical and this line of argument will not help solving the problem.

He cites one analogy in favour of the proposition. Both the *Grantha* and the *Nāgari* scripts are evolved from the Brāhmī, the former in the Tamil country and the latter in North India. But after the advent of the *Nāgari* in South India, the indigenous *Grantha* has almost disappeared and probably may become extinct in due course. It is ture Tamil was a highly developed language with a literature and grammatical works of its own even before the beginnings of the historical period. Tolkāppiyar himself refers in his works to the previous authors of Tamil grammar. Though they have been lost, they indicate that there must have been in existence some sort of writing then. What it was we do not know. But one thing is clear. The script used for the Tamil language in

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78. *akarattu imbar yakarap.p-pulliyum ai eṉ neṭuñeiṉai mey.peṟa-t.tōṉṟum*
(Sūtra, 56.)

78a. *Op. cit.*, p. 1608.

the days of Tolkāppiyar was derived from a script designed for a language which had no sounds for short *e* and *o*. Then it could not have been the original script designed for Brāhmī. It might have been anything, not excluding the possibility of proto Brāhmī. We have no means of ascertaining that. In the absence of sufficient materials, even to suggest the possibility there is no use in speculation, and it does not bring us nearer the solution.

Under the circumstances we are left only with the alternative proposition that the Brāhmī script was designed for the Prākṛt language. We shall therefore have to take the Brāhmī script as an indigenous evolution in this country, originally designed for the Prākṛt language and later on adapted for the Sanskrit and other languages.

APPENDIX

THE INDUS SCRIPT

Excavations at Mohenjo-daro in Sind and Harappa in West Panjab in the third decade of the present century, Rupar in East Panjab, Lothal in Saurashtra in the last decade and Kalibangan in Rajasthan now being conducted as also a large number of smaller excavations conducted at less important sites in the present Pakistan area and intensive explorations in the regions of Baluchistan and East Persia have revealed the existence of an ancient civilization in the region, usually referred to as the 'Indus Valley Civilization.'

The 'Indus Valley Civilization' which bore some characteristics common to the civilizations of the river valleys in Mesopotamia and Egypt has created various problems which are still engaging the attention of scholars. Many questions relating to them elude an acceptable or satisfactory answer. Among such questions may be mentioned the following: Who were the Indus Valley people? Was the civilization an indigenous one or a foreign one? If it was a foreign civilization which is the probable country from which it came to India? What language did the people speak? What is the script that they used for writing? Much has been written on these questions. But there is no unanimity of opinion among scholars on any of them.

With regard to the authors of the 'Indus Valley Culture' different views are expressed by writers on the subject. H. de Terra feels that the Indus Civilization must have evolved from an indigenous culture.[1] Stuart Piggot says: "the Harappa culture is known only in its mature form; it has no known beginnings, no tentative early phases before the outlines are firmly fixed. An origin outside India is inherently improbable, but where and in what form this origin was is quite unknown."[2] Mortimer Wheeler thinks that "this civilization was the result

1. *Studies on the Ice Age in India*, pp. 333 and 336.

2. *Prehistoric India*, p. 140.

of environmental opportunity offered to a people of creative genius which would account for its rapid development," and "that without that creative imagination no stretch of time could have provided a substitute."[3] Gordon Childe also feels that this culture must have evolved as a result of "years of patient effort."[4] Efforts are made by some scholars to study the problem and interpret the culture in the light of the background of Vedic Culture, and connect the people of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa with the Aryans themselves.[5] There are scholars who are disposed to think that they were of the Dravidian stock. The boldest exponent of this theory was Rev. Fr. H. Heras who says that people of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were Dravidians (Tamils) who spoke the proto-Tamil langauge.[6] Hunter is of the opinion "that the Indus Valley prior to the arrival of the Aryans was inhabited by Dravidians, and that the Brahuis of the neighbourhood are a remnant of this stock," though at the same he is careful enough to add, "but this is not certain, nor would it exclude the possibility of a riverine or a maritime folk of a different race being responsible for Mohenj-daro and Harappa."[7]

Some scholars are, however, definitely of the opinion that the 'Indus Valley' people were immigrants. D. H. Gordon, writes, for instance, that they "were some immigrant people (who) brought with them the knowledge of those things which form the basis of civilised living, and, by exploiting and adapting this knowledge to suit their new environment, were able by their drive and vision to establish within the matter of a hundered or so years, the pattern of culture which was to endure for a thousand. No further search is going to bring to light either in India or some adjacent country a Harappan

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3. *The Indus Civilization*, p. 14.

4. *New Light on the Most Ancient East*, p. 184.

5. Among them are Sankarananda (*The Rig Vedic Culture of the Prehistoric Indus*, II, p. 45); B.M. Barua, (*Indo Iranicā* I, pp. 15-21) and A.P. Karmarkar, (*Prācyavāṇi*, I, pp. 99-101.) T. N. Ramachandran and T.G. Aravamudhan also are almost of the same view, but their writings have not been published yet fully.

6. See his *Studies in Proto.Indo-Mediterranean Culture*, pp. 63-61.

7. *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro*, p. 12.

city site, where the constituents of this culture can be shown to have evolved for millennia, parallel to, but separate from the development of Sumer, Elam and ancient Iran."[8]

But it is not so easy to determine who the authors of the Indus Culture were. The only available material evidence about them consists of a few human skeletons and skulls found among the ruins. It is surmised from them that the people of the Indus Valley "comprised at least four different racial types, viz., proto-Australoid, Mediterranean, Alpinoid, and Mongoloid." ...... "The craniological evidence speaks not only of the diverse racial elements, but also of free racial mixture."[9] However, as Wheeler says, "the number of skeletons analysed to date is far too small to support any generalized estimate of the racial characters of the Harappans. All that can be said is that, as might be expected, the population of the Indus cities was as mixed as is that of most of their successors."[10]

With regard to the antiquity of the Indus culture, most scholars are agreed that it may be assigned to the third millennium B.C. The civilization of the Indus Valley which was essentially chalcolithic, iron not being found in any stratum in the course of excavations, bears similarities with the proto-historic civilization of Mesopotamia and Elam.

Some seals of Indian origin or style have been found at places like Ur, Kish, Tell Asmar and other sites in Mesopotamia and Iran; and they are of some help in roughly fixing the period of the Indus Valley Civilization referred to usually as the Harappa Culture. As Wheeler says, "the Indus civilization is dated primarily by its contacts with the proto-historic cities of Mesopotamia in the latter half of the third millennium B.C. and the earlier centuries of the second."[11] After an examination of the available evidence of such contacts Wheeler thinks that though there could have been contacts between the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia and other

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8. *The Pre.historic Background of Indian Culture*, p. 57-8.
9. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. I. (*The Vedic Age*), p. 193.
10. *The Indus Civilization*, (The Cambridge History of India, Supplementary Volume), p. 52.
11. *Ibid*, p. 84.

kingdoms from earlier times "the bulk of the known date of the Harappan sites may equate rather with the Akkadian (Sargonid) and post Akkadian periods than with any considerable portion of the Early Dynastic."[12] But the evidence for contact between the Indus Civilization and the west in pre-Sargonic period being not impressive, "on current dating the maximum period required to cover these possibilities would be 2500-1500 B.C., with a strong focus on c. 2350 B.C."[13] The civilization must, however, have had "a long period of antecedent development." It continued obviously for a long time after the time of Sargon, as may be seen from the finds at Ur, Lagash and some other places of a few seals of Indian origin which are post-Akkadian and are assignable to the middle of the second millennium B.C.

The most noteworthy feature of the culture of the Indus Valley relates to the use of an indigenous script which appears on a large number of beautifully cut seals of steatite from various sites. Most of them are probably amulets. About 800 of the seals have been inscribed. Many scholars have tried to decipher the writing; but it has defied their attempts. Most scholars have defined the writing as one of stylised pictographs. It must be noted that, though the civilization of the Indus Valley extended over a fairly long period, there was not much development in the form of the letters. "The script is found in one stage only, so that we cannot trace its genesis from the pictographic to the ideographic or phonetic, or its later development to any of the scripts of India."[14] Antecedent evolution till the signs became standardised cannot be ruled out. However, "the script remains in what may be called, on Egyptian analogy, the hieroglyphic state; it has not degenerated nor been worn down by use to conventional summaries like the Egyptian hieratic, the Babylonian cuneiform or the Chinese writing."[15]

Attempts have been made by various scholars to decipher the script on the seals. L. A. Waddell, one of the earliest scholars to attempt the difficult task, thought that there were links between

12. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

14. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. I. (*The Vedic Age*), p. 190.

15. Wheeler. *The Indus civilization*, p. 82.

the Sumerian script and the Mohenjo-daro script, compared the signs in both of them, tried to read all the inscriptions as Sumerian and concluded that the inhabitants of Mohenjo-daro were Aryans.[16] Langdon connected these signs with the Brāhmī script of later times and said that the phonetic values of the signs were utmost biconsonantal.[17] C. J. Gadd also held similar views and concluded that the writing was at least in part syllabic, the language of the inscriptions Indo-Aryan and that the seal inscriptions were in general names.[18] Pran Nath gave alphabetic values to a number of signs of the Indus Valley script, compared them with those of the Brāhmī script and like Langdon, thought that the latter was derived from the former. According to him the strokes which appear within or round the original signs "show a remarkable resemblance to the vowel signs used in the earliest Brahmi writing of southern as well as Northern India."[19] According to him "the language is understood to be some form of Prakrit or old pre-Vedic language."[20] Sudhansu Kumar Ray has tried to bring together some indications to show that the signs on the seals are alphabetic along with many picture signs which have only noncommittal syllabic values but having no reference whatever to the apparent pictorial meaning of the signs.[20a] W. M. Flinders Petrie, the well-known Egyptologist, thought that the script of Mohenjo-daro had something in common with the Egyptian hieroglyphs, which were ideographic. According to him the seals of Mohenjo-daro contain not the name of the officials but only their title.[21] His views, however, have not received acceptance among scholars; particularly on the ground that "if all the seals had belonged to officials, then almost every inhabitant of Mohenjo-daro must have been an official personage and member of the court."[22] M. G. de

16. *The Indo-Sumerian Seals Deciphered*, pp. 23.26.
17. Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*, Vol. II. p. 423.
18. *Ibid.*, II. p. 314.
19. "The script of the Indus Valley seals," *J.R.A.S.*, 1931. p. 674.
20. *Ibid.*
20a. See *Indus Script*—Memorandum No. I. (Published by the Institute of Egyptologists, New Delhi, 1963) and also *Shakti*. Dec. 1964 and Feb. 1965.
21. "Mohenjodaro." *Ancient Egypt*, p. 35.
22. "Latest Attempts to read the Indus Script", *Indian Culture*; Vol. I, p. 53.

Hevesy thought there was close similarity between the Indus Valley script and the recent script of the Easter Islands, a quiet remote islet in the Pacific Ocean, about 2500 miles to the west of the cosat of Chile. He has compared about 130 signs of both the scripts.[23] But in spite of the external likeness between the two scripts, points like the distance of time between the period of one script and the other, of space extending over thousands of miles, "the lack of any evidence proving the existence of intermediate script in the remote age of the Indus valley script" have to be taken into account before postulating any connection between the two. G. R. Hunter has made a detailed study of the script in its varied aspects. After tabulating all the signs "he believes that he has thereby obtained the interpretation of certain symbols, such as the ordinal suffix, the ablative and dative terminations, the numeral signs"...[24] On the basis of the resemblance between the Indus Valley script on the one hand and the Sumerian and the Elamite on the other he, like some other scholars, is inclined to suggest that the Indus Valley script came from Western Asia. He says: "Many of the signs bear a remarkable resemblance to the monumental script of Ancient Egypt. The entire body of anthropomorphous signs has Egyptian equivalents which are virtually exact. And it is interesting to note that not one of these anthropomorphous signs have the remotest parallel in Sumerian and Proto-Elamite. On the other hand there are many of our signs that are exactly parallelled in the Proto-Elamite and Jemdet-Nasr tablets such as that have no conceivable morphographic equivalent in Egyptian. One is bound to conclude that the presumption is strong that our script has been borrowed in part from Egypt, and in part from Mesopotamia. Of course there is a considerable proportion of signs that are common to all three scripts, such as the signs for tree, fish, bird etc. But this is coincidental, and indeed inevitable in the very nature of pictography. It is only safe to draw inferences of casual connection where the less obvious and more conventionalised ideograms, especially those that are so conventionalised that their pictographic origin is hardly determinable, show a marked correspondence; and in a lesser degree, where easily recognisable

23. "Sur une Ecriture Oceanique paraissant d'origine neolithic' *Bulletin de la Societe Pre historique Francaise*, Vol. XXX, 434-49. also an English rendering of the same in *J.I.H.*, XIII, pp. 1.17

24. Diringer, *The Alphabet*, p. 85.

pictographs show the same variations. Now the latter is very marked as between our script and proto-Elamite, as will appear from a study of the Comparative Table............Of course it is possible that all three had a common ancestry, and that the Egyptian element in our script alone was borrowed. It is even possible that all four scripts may have had a common origin. But this is an enquiry that does not concern us here, and which in the nature of pictography, would be very hard to solve without the aid of anthropological evidence as to whether or not there was in prehistoric times racial affinity between the inhabitants of the Nile, Euphrates and Indus valleys."[25] He believes that the script was mainly phonetic and not alphabetic,[26] though he acknowledges that its origin was pictographic and ideographic. He further feels that the Brāhmī script was derived from the script of Mohenjo-daro.[27] B. Hrozny, famous for his interpretation of the Hittite inscriptions, thought that the Indus Valley people were Indo-Europeans and even Proto-Hittites who reached India even before the Ṛgvedic Aryans. He connects the Indus scripts with the Hittite hieroglyphic writing. According to Hrozny there were nearly 110 symbols which were important phonetic signs, of which "no less than 86 are considered as the symbols for six sounds only; 45 signs for the sound *si*, *se*, *sa* and *s*."[28] But his interpretation has not been received well by scholars. It is remarked, for instance, that "While acknowledging Hrozny's brilliancy as a decipherer, one cannot help feeling that he has tackled too difficult a task."[29]

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25. *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, and its connection with other scripts*, pp. 45-7.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-19.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 45. Among the objections raised against such a theory two are important:

a) The pictographs of the Indus valley are solitary finds and they do not occur elsewhere in India.

b) The intervening space of about 2000 or 2500 years still remains a blank and no inscriptions have been found which may be assigned to the intermediate period.

It is the spade of the archaeologist that must bridge the gulf and make available to us relics of the dark period that may throw light on the question.

28. See Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-6.

29. Ibid.

Herr P. Merggi, who argued that the authors of the Indus Script were not a Sanskrit speaking people, thought that the script was ideophonographic, to which the Hittite hieroglyphic script bore some similarity. He believed that the documents were administrative seals.[30]

Swami Sankarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission expressed the view that the script was a Tantraic one.[31] Dr. B. M. Barua also thought that 'the key to the Indus Valley inscriptions lies in the Tantric Texts."[32] While Dr. Karmarkar read the inscription in Sanskrit.[33] Rev. Fr. H. Heras who was strongly of the view that the remains of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro were non-Aryan, and probably only Dravidian, thought that the people were Dravidians who spoke the Proto-Dravidian language. According to him the script is picto-phonographic. The signs of Mohenjo-daro do not stand for syllables or consonant sounds only, but express full words.[34] He "has sought to read old Tamil in these seals from the South Punjab and Sind; but it is highly improbable that in epigraphs from a culture-age going back to, say, 2500 B.C., there should be found a language which is not much older than 500 A.D."[35] As Diringer says, "the attempts of Fr. H. Heras S. J. to equate the most up-to-date linguistic forms with the undeciphered seals belonging to the third millennium B.C. might put the unwary on the wrong track."[36]

In spite of various valiant attempts by scholars mentioned above to read and interpret, it is not possible to say anything definite regarding the script since no one has been able to find the key for reading and interpreting the scripts. All the

30. "Zur Indus Schrift", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlan-dischen Gesellschaft* (N.F.) XII, pp. 189.241. referred to by Rev. H. Heras, *Studies in Proto-Indo Mediterranean Culture*, pp. 39.43.

31. See Rev. H. Heras *op. cit.*, pp. 44-52.

32. Ibid., pp. 53.56.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

34. *Ibid.*, 61-90.

35. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, (*The Vedic Age*), p. 156.

36. *op.cit.*, p. 338.

suggestions given are only tentative. Even an external classification of the symbols is not always possible. There is no unanimity of opinion about the number of signs. The number of characters listed comes to 396 according to some, and 288 or 253 according to others. Opinion is also divided among scholars with regard to the direction of writing. But the general view seems to be that the inscriptions begin from the right, but when there are more than one line they are boustrophedon.[37] Wheeler is inclined to think that the script "is probably syllabic, with the admixture of some pictorial representations or ideograms and perhaps determinatives, on the lines of cuneiform."[37a] According to him a large number of letters have accents added to them "a remarkable feature which itself emphasises phonetic maturity." Further "the script bears no ascertainable relationship with any contemporary or near-contemporary script."[38]

While dealing with the problem of the origin of the Indus Valley script Diringer writes: "It seems obvious that the Indus valley script which is rather schematic and linear on the extant inscriptions, was originally pictographic, but it is impossible to decide whether it was truly indigenous or imported. A connection between this script and the common ancestor of the cuneiform writing and of the early Elamite script is probable, but it is impossible to determine what the connection was. Some solutions—none of them can be considered certain—may be suggested, for instance :

1. The Indus valley script was perhaps derived from an at present unknown, early script, which may have been the common ancestor also of the cuneiform and early Elamite writings.

2. All three might have been local creations, one probably the prototype of the cuneiform or of the early Elamite script being an original invention and the other two

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37. See B. B. Lal, *Indian Archaeology Since Independence*, p. 18 and A. H. Dani, *Indian Palaeography*, p. 16.

37a. *The Indus Civilization*, p. 82.

38. *Ibid.*

being creations inspired by the knowledge of the existence of writing.[39]

But it should not be forgotten that according to ancient tradition (i) the authors of the ancient Egyptian Civilization migrated to Egypt from Western Asia; (ii) the Phoenicians were colonists in Tyre and the Sumerians themselves migrated to Sumer from outside by sea. It should also be noted that the Hittite inscriptions in similar script are written in the Indo-European language.[40]

In spite of all that has been written on the subject, the Indus Valley script will have to remain a mystery till such a time as a key of an unimpeachable character or "a bilingual inscription and a known language, or a long inscription with significant recurrent features" is found.[41]

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39. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

40. *Ibid.*

41. It is possible to contend that a large number of pieces of prehistoric pottery inscribed with written signs which are probably alphabetic in value have been discovered in the erstwhile Hyderabad State. (*The Journal of the Haiderabad Archaeological Society*, 1917, pp. 57 ff. and in the ancient Purāṇa coins with similiar signs in the extreme south of India (*Mysore Archaeological Report*, 1935.) It should be noted however, that these pottery marks have not been satisfactorily worked upon. Further they do not bear much resemblance to the Indus Valley signs. Their phonetic values are also not known.

CHAPTER III

A. ANTIQUITY OF WRITING IN INDIA

Indian traditions of both the orthodox and hetrodox sects claim great antiquity for the art of writing in India. According to them it was created by Brahmā, the God of creation. The *Narada Smṛti*, a redaction of the *Manu Samhita* and a work on ancient Hindu Law usually assigned to the 5th century A.D. (referred to by Bāṇa, the court poet of Harṣa of Kanauj) states: "Had not Brahmā the creator created the written (literature), the best of eyes, this world could have never attained to its happy condition."[1] Bṛhaspati in his *Vārttika* on Manu mentions the some tradition when he says, "because in a period of six months memory is confused regarding a particular thing, in very early times the creator produced letters depicted on leaves."[2] Again Kālidāsa stresses the value of learning the art of writing and says, "by the proper grasp of the art of writing one reaches the vast treasure of literature, as one approaches the ocean through the mouth of a river."[3]

There are evidences in the Vedas themselves that the art of writing was known even during that age. The Ṛgveda mentions the names of metres like the *Gayatri*, *Anuṣṭubha*, *Bṛhati*, *Viraja*, *Triṣṭubha*, *Jagatı* etc.[4] The *Vajsaneyi Samhita* of the Yajurveda mentions some additional metres like *paṅkti*, *dvipada*, *tripada*, *catuṣpada ṣaṭpada* etc.[5] The Atharvaveda contains reference to eleven metres.[6] The names of metres and the technical terms

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1. *S.B.E.*, XXXIII, pp. 58 ff.
   Nākariṣyadyadi Brahmā likhitam cakṣuruttamam
   tatreyamasya lokasya nā bhaviṣyat śubhā gatiḥ
   See also Bṛhaspati's *Vārttikā* on Manu, *Ibid.*, p. 304.
2. *Ṣāṇmasike tu samaye bhrantiḥ samjāyate yataḥ*
   dhātrākṣaṇi sṛṣṭani patrārūḍanyath purā
   (quoted in *Ahnikatattva.*)
3. *Liperyatha vad grahapena vanyam nade*
   mukheneva samudramaviśat !
   (*Raghuvamśa*, III, 28).
4. X, 14. 16; 132. 3. 4.
5. XI. 8; XIV. 19, XXIII. 33; XXVIII. 14.
6. VIII. 9. 19.

regarding the composition could have been possible only after the systematisation of the rules of prosody; and this presupposes a knowledge of the art of writing. Reference is also made in the Vedic literature to high figures involving knowledge of complicated Mathematics which could have been possible only with the use of written numbers and Arithmetic. The Ṛgveda mentions that king Sāvarṇi gave away in alms one thousand cows with the number eight marked on the ears of each.[7] This custom is also noticed by Paṇini. The *Vajsaneyi Samhita* of the Yajurveda includes the astronomer (*gaṇika*) in the list of persons connected with the sacrifice *Puruṣamēdha*[8] The *Taittirīya Samhita* mentions the following numbers in the ascending order; *daṣa* (10), *śata* (100), *sahasra* (1000), *ayuta* (10,000), *niyuta* (1,00,000), *prayuta* (10,00,000), *arbuda* (1,00,00,000) *nyarbuda* (10,00,00,000), *samudra* (1,00,00,00,000), *madhya* (10,00,00,00,000), *anta* (1,00,00,00,00,000) and *prardha* (10,00,00,00,00,000).[9] References to high figures are found in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature also.[10] The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions minute divisions of a day and night. It says that a day and a night together consist of 30 *muhūrtas*, one *muhūrta* of 15 *kṣipras* one *kṣipra* of 15 *etarhis*, one *etarhi* of 15 *idānims* and one *idānim* of 15 *prāṇas*. It will be seen from the above that a day and a night contain 30×15×15×15×15=15,18,750 *prāṇas*.[11] One *prāṇa* is equal to 1/17 of a second. These calculations would have been possible only with written figures, and imply the existence and a good knowledge of the art of writing.

There are other pieces of evidence also which would suggest the antiquity of writing in India. The *Nirukta* of Yāska, a work on the etymology of words, contains the names of some of his predecessors, namely Audumbarāyaṇa, Āgrāyaṇa, Aruṇavābha, Aupamanyava, Gārgya, Gālava, Kāṭṭhakya, Kautsa, Carmaśiras, Taitiki, Varṣyāyani, Śākalya, Śatabalākṣa, Śākaṭāyana, Śākapūṇi and Sthaulāṣṭivi. This list[12] of the predecessors of Yāska in the field of technical works on language takes them to a very early period as also the art of writing.

7. *Sahasram me dadato aṣṭakarṇyaḥ*. X. 62. 7.
8. *grāmaṇyam gaṇakamabhikrośakam tanmahase*. XXX. 20.
9. IV. 40. 11. 4; VII. 2. 21. 1.
10. *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, XVIII. 3. *Śatapatha Br.*, X. 4. 2; 22-25.
11. XII. 3. 2. 1.
12. The list is only selective.

The *Upaniṣads* contain references to *akṣaras* or letters.[13] It is said they were not only pronounced but also written since they were associated with suffix *kāsa* (something to be made) and with *varṇa* (something to be coloured or painted).[14] Some of the *Upaniṣads* mention *varṇa* (written letters) and *mātras* (medial signs) together.[15]

Some of the *Āraṇyakas* make minute differentiation between *ūṣman* (sibilants), *sparśa* (mutes), *svara* (vowels) and *antastha* (semi-vowels), as also between *vyañjana* (consonants) and *ghoṣa* (voice) and between *mūrdhanya* (cerebral) and *dantya* (dental). There is a discussion on *sandhi* (joining of letters). Further the composition of the sacred *akṣara, om,* is explained there as a combination of letters *a, u* and *m*.[16] It must be remembered that the *Upaniṣads, Araṇyakas* and the *Brāhmaṇas* which are all largely composed in prose constitute a voluminous literature, and could not have been handed down from generation to generation merely by rote. The existence of many technical terms on grammar, etymology and prosody in them also makes one think that there must have been some knowledge of writing even then.

There are definite references to the art of writing in some ancient works. For instance, the *Aṣṭādhyāyi* of Pāṇini contains a few words which have some bearing on writing in general. Pāṇini has been assigned to the fourth century B.C. by Max Muller and Bühler and to the eighth century by Goldstucker. The words bearing on writing are, for instance, *lipi* (script), *lipikāra* (writer or scribe),[17] *yavanāni* (Greek script),[18]

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13. *Himkāra iti tryakṣaram prastāva iti tryakṣaram tatsamam* (*Chhandogya*, II. 10).

14. *Chhandogya*, I, 13. ; II, 22. 3.

15. *Varṇaḥ svaraḥ mātra balam* (*Taittirīya*, I. 1.)

16. *Aitareya*, III, 2. 1 ; II, 2. 4 ; III, 2. 6 ; III, 1. 5.

17. 13.2.21. Bühler thinks that the words "*Dipi* and *Lipi* are probably derived from the old Persian *Dipi*, which cannot have reached India before the conquest of the panjab by Darius about B.C. 500, and which later became *Lipi* ". (*Indian Palaeography*, p. 5.) Pandey has well pointed out that the word is not derived from *dipi*. See his *Indian Palaeography*, p. 11, fn. 1.

18. 4-1-49.

grantha (a book),[19]. *svarita* (a mark in writing)[20] etc. Pāṇini mentions the practice of the marking of the ears of cattle with the signs of figures 5 and 8 as also religious symbols like the *svastika*, 卐.[21] Further he refers to a number of earlier writers on Sanskrit Grammar, among them being Apiśali,[22] Kaśyapa,[23] Gālava,[24] Gārgya,[25] Cakravarman,[26] Bhāradvāja,[27] Yāska,[28] Sākalya,[29] Sākaṭāyana,[30] and Sēnoka.[31] All this shows the long history of Sanskrit grammar, before Pāṇini. This could have been possible only if the art of writing had been known to the earliest of them. Curiously enough Max-Muller writes, "I maintain that there is not a single word in Pāṇini's terminology which presupposes the existence of writing,"[32] and thus ignores the above references. He has also overlooked the fact that a work on advanced and developed grammar itself presupposes writing. In this connection it may be mentioned that the languages or dialects of the words without a definite knowledge of the script has not been known to possess a codified grammar.

The *vedāṅga-śikṣa* (the science of correct pronunciation), *kalpa* (ritual, procedure or litany), *nirukta* (etymology), *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *chhandas* (prosody) and *jyōtiṣa* (astronomy), all of which constitute very ancient branches of the technical literature of India, also lead one to think that the art of writing was not unknown in India in ancient times.

The *Sūtra* literature which has by common consent been assigned to the period between the eighth and the third centuries

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19. 1.3-75; 3-87; 4.3-116.
20. 1-3-11.
21. 6-3-115.
22. 1.2.25.
23. 6.3.61.
24. 8-3.20.
25. 6-1-130.
26. 7.2-63.
27. 2-4.63.
28. 8.3.19.
29. 3-4-111.
30. 5.4-112.
31. 6-1.123.
32. *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 262.

B. C. also bears evidence of the knowledge of writing in the country. For example the *Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra* mentions written documents for purposes of legal evidence.[33]

The *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, which belongs to the fourth ceutury B. C., makes definite mention of writing. Among such references in it are the following:

i. Having gone through the tonsure ceremony the student should learn the alphabet and writing.[34]

ii. In the fifth (*nālika*) the king should correspond in writs (*patra sampreṣaṇena*) with the assembly of his ministers.[35]

iii. With signs and writings he should send his spies.[36]

iv. The writer should be prompt in composing, elegant in writing and able in reading documents.[37]

The epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* contain a number of terms relating to writing, such as *likh, lekha, lekhana, lekhaka* etc. The two works are usually assigned to a period before the Mauryan age, though not in its present form. Some are inclined to think that there are some interpolations in the work. Still Bühler himself thinks that "though the testimony of the Epics can, therefore, only be used with due reserve, yet it is undeniable that their terms regarding writing and writers are archaic."[38]

Literary works in classical Sanskrit such as epics, *smṛtis, kāvyas,* dramas and works dealing with polity, morals and technical subjects contain innumerable references to the art of writing in India. Though such of them as are posterior to the days of Aśoka may not be of much value as evidence

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33. XVI, 10-14-15.

34. 1.5.2. *Vṛtta caula karmā lipisaṁkhyānām copayuñjīta.*

35. 1.19.6. *Pañcame mantripariṣada patra sampreṣaṇena mantrayet.*

36. 1. 12, 8.

37. II. 10.2.

38. *Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII, App., p. 4.

of the earlier existence of writing in India, the Brahmanical literature of the country assignable to the period before the rise of Buddhism are of much value for a study of the problem of the antiquity of writing in India.

Besides the early Brahmanical literature of the country, the early Jaina and Buddhist literature also bears testimony to the knowledge of writing in India from very early times. The early Jaina works, the *Samavāyanga Sutta*, the traditional date of which is considered to be about 300 B.C., and the *Paṇṇavāṅa Sutta*, traditionally ascribed to about 168 B. C. mention eighteen kinds of scripts as then in use in the country. The latter work divides the Āryas into nine classes, the sixth of which is the *bhāṣāriya*, 'Aryan by language', who speak the Ardhamāgadhi (the Prākṛt in which Mahāvīra is said to have preached the Jaina religion and with whom the Brāhmī script is customary).[39] The *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, another Jaina work, has *Namo Bhambhīya liviye* (Salutation to the Brāhmī script).

Among the Buddhist works the *Mahāvastu* gives a list of thirty names as the varieties of script prevailing in the country. The *Lalitavistara*, a work in Sanskrit dealing with the life of the Buddha,[40] describes how the Buddha as a boy went to the *lipi śala* (a school where writing was taught) and how Viśvāmitra, his teacher, taught him letters on a writing board of sandal wood and with a golden pen.[41] The book further states that sixty-four kinds of scripts were in use in the country and gives their names. The numbers eighteen, thirty, sixty-four etc., are considered auspicious and some scholars hold the view that these numbers should not be taken seriously. Anyhow, these clearly show that many varieties of scripts were in use in the country even in those days.

The works included in the *Vinaya piṭaka* commend the art of writing (*lekhana*) to the monks on account of its

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39. Pischel, *Prakrit Grammar*, Introduction, Tr. into English by Bata Krishna Ghosh, *Indian Culture*, Vol. II, (1935-36), p. 474.

40. It is not easy to fix correctly its date. But as the work was translated into the Chinese in 308 A.D. it may be taken to belong to a period at least one or two centuries earlier.

41. Ch. X.

innocence.[42] The *Mahavagga* mentions *lekha* (writing), *gaṇana* (arithmetic) and *rūpa*[43] which formed the curriculum of studies in the primary schools in ancient India. The *Jatakas* which contain stories of the earlier lives of the Buddha refer to *phalaka* (wooden writing-board) and *varṇaka* (wooden pen) as used for writing.[44] They also mention writing in connection with official and private letters,[45] royal proclamations[46] documents relating to family affairs,[47] moral and political maxims,[48] usury and bonds[49] and manuscripts.[50] The *Suttanta* is a book of sermons on the conduct of the *bhikṣus*. Among the prohibitions for them was the *Akkharika* (*Akṣarika*), a game that was played by children and in which one had to recognise letters written with fingers either on one's back or in the sky.[51]

Foreigners who visited India in ancient times also testify to the antiquity of writing in India. The earliest of them were the Greeks, some of whom, on account of their stay in the country for some time, had occasions to observe closely the general conditions of the people in all their aspects. One of them was Nearchus, one of the generals of Alexander during his invasion of India. He says that the people of the Panjab knew the art of manufacturing paper out of cotton and tattered cloths, obviously for writing

42. *Bhikkupacittiya*, 2. 2.
43. *Ibid.*, 65. 1.
44. Ch. X.
45. *Kathaka Jātaka*; *Kāma Jataka*.
46. *Rūru Jātaka*.
47. *Kaṇha Jataka*.
48. *Kurudhamma Jātaka*.
49. *Rūru Jātaka*.
50. Bühler, *Indian Studies*, III. 120.
51. *Brahmajāla sutta*, 14; *Samaññaphalasutta*, 49.

Terms like *lekha*, *lekhaka*, *likhati*, *akkhara*, *chindati* etc., and also the writing materials of wood, bamboo, *paṇṇo* (leaves), *suvaṇṇapaṭṭa*., etc. are mentioned in early Buddhist literature. Bühler opines that these refer to the primitive character of writing, that is incision of signs on hard materials like stone. (*Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII, App. p. 5). Only the word *chindati* suggests incision, which may apply to writing on palm leaves (*talapatra*). But the writing on *bhūrjapatra* (birch bark) was done with the aid of inks. Further it is also to be remembered that even for writing on stone, the signs are first traced on stone by ink or chalk or some visible solution, and then the masons inscribe the signs following the tracing.

purposes."[51a] Q. Curtius, another Greek writer refers to the inner tender bark of certain trees used for writing. It was probably the *bhūrjapatra* or birch-bark.[52] Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleukos Niketor at the court of Candragupta Maurya, writes in his *Indica* that for the convenience of travellers mile stones were fixed on the roads at intervals of ten *stadia* so that they could know the distance between rest-houses.[53] He also refers to the current practice of expounding *varṣaphala, i.e.* the good and bad prospects of the coming year according to an almanac as also the preparation of horoscopes for individuals. These would clearly prove that the art of writing was known and practised in India in the fourth century B. C. They do not hint anywhere that writing in India was of foreign origin.

Certain other foreign sources also indicate the tradition that the art of writing was indigenous to the country. The *Fa-Wan-Shu-Lin,* a Chinese encyclopaedia says that the Brāhmī script, written from left to right, was invented by *Fan* (Brahmā).[54] The celebrated Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang also refers to the very early invention of writing in India.[55] Alberuni, the Arab scholar, records a slightly different story. He says that the Hindus had once forgotten the art of writing and that through a divine inspiration it was rediscovered by Vyāsa, the son of Parāśara.[56] According to him the history of the Indian alphabets would begin with the commencement of the *Kaliyuga* in 3101 B. C. This tradition got currency evidently due to the fact that Vyāsa is belived to have collected the Vedas and classified them into four and composed the eighteen Purāṇas and the *Mahābhārata.*

It may be noted that Megasthenes and Hiuen Tsang were minute observers of the customs and manners of the people and recorded their observations. Alberuni, an Arab full of Semitic

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51a. Strabo, XV. 717. Bühler takes this to mean that they wrote letters on well-beaten cotton cloth (*Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII, App. 6).

52. Mc Crindle, *History of Alexander's Invasion of India*, VIII. 9.

53. *Indica*, 91, 125-26.

54. Babylonian and Oriental Record, I, 59. quoted by Bühler, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

55. Beal, *Si yu ki*, I, p. 77.

56. Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, I, 171.

sympathies would not have missed to record the Semitic origin of the Brahmī script, if he had got even the slighest hint about it. On the other hand he says that the script was invented in India itself. His statement is quite in conformity with the literary traditions about the origin of the script preserved in the country.

Thus all the evidence, traditional, literary, circumstantial and inferential points to the great antiquity of the art of writing in India from the remotest past and its indigenous evolution. It is, however, unfortunate that such antiquity has not been substantiated by the discovery of specimens of writing going back to such antiquity. In fact the earliest datable records so far discovered are the royal edicts of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka (273-36 B.C.).

It is true that there are some records and coins bearing writing assigned to the pre-Aśoka period, *viz.*, fourth and fifth centuries B.C. But scholars are not unanimous in their dating of these records, some of them bringing down such writing to as late as the first and second centuries B.C., in the post-Aśoka period. The following are the important ones among them:

i. *The Eran Coin Legend*:

A coin with a legend has been found at Eran near Jabbalpore.[57] The legend is believed to run from right to left. Bühler uses this as one of his strong points for postulating the theory of a Semitic origin for the Brāhmī script. The forms of some of the letters in the legend are considered to be earlier than those in the Aśokan inscriptions.[58]

ii. *The Taxila Coin Brahmī Legend*:

On palaeographic and numismatic grounds it is placed in the fourth century B.C.[59]

iii. *The Mahāsthān Stone Plaque Inscription*:

This inscription was found in the Bogra district in Bengal. It records an endowment to the *Pañcavargiya*

57. Cunningham, *Ancient Coins of India*, p. 101.

58. *Indian Palaeography, Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII, App. p. 8.

59. Cunningham, *op. cit.*

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(order of the) Buddhist monks. It is also considered to be pre-Aśoka.[60]

iv. *The Piprahwa Buddhist Vase Inscription*:

It was discovered at Piprahwa in the Basti District in Uttar Pradesh. It records the dedication of a relic casket containing the portion obtained by the Śākyas out of the mortal remains of the Buddha and it can be assigned to c. 483 B.C. the date of his *nirvāṇa*.[61]

v. *The Sohgoura Copper Plate Inscription*:

This was discovered in 1894 in the Gorakpur District in Uttar Pradesh. The inscription which is in Prākṛt runs to four lines and records the provision of grains and fodder during periods of famine.[62]

vi. *The Badhi Inscription*:

The inscription was discovered in the Ajmer District. It reads *Vīrāya Bhagavate Catusite Vase* (dedicated to Lord (Mahā) Vīra in his 84th year). It is assigned to 443 B.C. (527—84.)[63]

As said above there is no unanimity of opinion among scholars with regard to the dates of these inscriptions.[63a]

vii. *The Bhaṭṭiprolu Relic-casket Drāviḍī Inscriptions*:

These inscriptions engraved on the relic caskets found at Bhaṭṭiprolu[64] in the Brāhmī script of the Drāvidi type are unique. Bühler who has edited them in the

60. *Ep. Ind.*, XXI, p. 85; *Ind. Hist. Quarterly*, 1934, pp. 57. ff. Luders, *List*, No. 931.

61. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1898, pp. 387. ff.

62. *Ep. Ind.*, XXII, p. 2; *Ind. Hist. Quarterly*, X. pp. 54. ff. Luder's, *List*, No. 932.

63. Ojah. *Prācina Lipimālā*. The inscription is preserved in the Rajputana Museum, Ajmer.

63a. D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I, pp. 82-86; also David Diringer *The Alphabet*, pp. 332 and 338.

64. In the Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh.

Epigraphia Indica assigns to them a date slightly earlier than the period of Aśoka.[65]

Scholars who are unwilling or hesitant to assign high antiquity to the art of writing in India mainly base their conclusions on the *argumentum ex silentium*, ignoring some of the literary references to it cited above giving later dates to some others. But one thing they cannot ignore, namely the internal evidence furnished by the inscriptions of Aśoka. They are engraved on rocks, pillars of stone or the walls of caves in the then main scripts of the country, Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhi, and distributed over a wide area throughout the length and breadth of the country from the Himalayas in the north to Siddhapura, Yeṟṟaguḍi and Rājulamandagiri (roughly a little to the south of the Tungabhadrā) in the south and from Girnar in the Kathiawar in the west to Dhauli and Jaugadha in the east. A study of the palaeography of these records indicates the following characteristics.

i. The majority of the letters in these inscriptions have different forms, which must have developed under varying conditions in different regions, and periods by different peoples. For instance, the letter *A* vowel alone has more than ten forms (Bühler).

ii. At least two main varieties of scripts, northern and southern are noticed, though other regional varieties are also traceable.

iii. Again it is seen that each letter has two forms, the monumental (generally angular and carved with due attention being paid to its aesthetic aspect) and the cursive (with a tendency to the formation of curves as in ordinary writing). This would be possible only when the letters had been in use for a long time to enable them to be easily recognised and identified.

iv. Some letters show advanced forms indicating that they were changing in their basic forms in the course of their evolution.

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65. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. II, pp. 323 ff.; D. C. Sircar, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 215. ff.

Bühler says: "The existence of so many local varieties, and of so very numerous cursive forms proves in any case that writing had a long history in Aśoka's time and that the alphabet was then in a state of transition."[66] Several centuries should have elapsed for the development of the several varieties of scripts to be used in the inscriptions of the period of Aśoka. Aśoka himself says that he was engraving his edict on stone so that it may last long.[67] This implies that writing was then made on perishable materials also. Further the Mauryan Emperor prescribed a number of religious texts for daily use and recital by monks and laity alike.[68] These works, it is certain, were not engraved on stone but written on common materials such as leaves, barks or paper which were all frail and perishable. The use of such perishable material also explains why specimens of earlier writing are not found in the country. The few specimens so far recovered are only either on stone or metal which will not easily perish. Further it is the practice to discard old manuscripts after they are copied afresh for future generation. By this process even the script would be changed, only the one prevailing at the time of copying being used.

The system of education that obtained in ancient India laid emphasis on learning direct from the teachers by mouth personally, thus memorising the text.[69] The Vedas had to be pronounced correctly and it was believed that incorrect pronunciation would kill the *Yajamān*. This could be achieved only by oral learning direct from a teacher qualified for the same. Even in secular literature memorising of the texts was considered necessary. These do not, however, mean that written texts were not used at all, as will be evident from the view of Bṛhaspati referred to earlier.

Bothling in his English introduction to the edition of the *Mānavakalpa Sūtra* prepared by Goldstucker says that in his opinion, though writing was not used for the propagation of literature (which was done orally) it was employed at

66. *Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII., App. p. 8.
67. Rock Edict II, Khalsi.
68. Bhabru Edict.
69. Rg. Veda, VII, 103.5.

the time of composing new works.[70] The mention in the *Mahabharata* that Gaṇeśa wrote the text to the dictation of the author. Vyāsa as he went on composing is quite in conformity with the above. Roth was strongly of the opinion that the art of writing must have been known very early in India for works like the *Prātiśākhyas* of the Vedas could not be composed without its help.[71] Bühler himself says: "there is nothing to bar the conjecture, repeatedly put forward that even during the Vedic period manuscripts were used as auxiliaries both in oral instruction and on other occasions. An argument in favour of this conjecture, it is now possible to adduce the indisputable fact that the Brāhmī alphabet has been formed by phonologists or grammarians and for scientific use".[72]

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70. p. 69.

71. Quoted by Ojah, *Prācīnalipimālā*, p. 15.

72. *Ind. Ant.*, XXXIII, App. p. 4.

B. ANTIQUITY OF WRITING IN SOUTH INDIA

It has been noticed above that the Jaina works, the *Samavāyangasutta* and the *Paṇṇavānasutta* mention that eighteen varieties of scripts were prevalent in the country in early times.[1] The Buddhist work *Lalitavistara* refers to sixty-four scripts as having been in use in the country in the days of the Buddha[2] Those found in the Jaina list are in Prākṛt while those found in the Buddhist work are in Sanskrit.

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1. The eighteen scripts are:
    1. Bambhi (Brāhmi)
    2. Yavanāni or Yavaṇāliya (Greek script)
    3. Dosapuriya (Dosapurisa)
    4. Kharotthi (Kharoṣṭhi)
    5. Pukkharasariyā
    6. Bhogavaiyā
    7. Pahārāiya (Paharaiyā)
    8. Uya.amtarikkiyā (Uyamitra Kariyā)
    9. Akkharapaṭṭiyā (Akkharapumṭṭhiyā)
    10. Tevanniyā (Veṇaiyā)
    11. Gi (ni) nhaiyā (or ṇhiṇattiyā)
    Amkalivi (Amkalikkha)
    13. Gaṇitalivi (Ganiyalivi)
    14. Gamdhavva.livi
    15. Ādamsalivi (Āyasalivi)
    16. Māhesari (Māhassari)
    17. Dāmili (Dravidian or Tamil)
    18. Polimdi (Paulindi, belonging to the Pulindas).

2. The sixty-four scripts are:
    1. Brāhmī
    2. Kharoṣṭhi
    3. Puṣkarasāri
    4. Aṅgalipi
    5. Vaṅgalipi
    6. Magadhalipi
    7. Maṅgalyalipi
    8. Maṇuṣyalipi
    9. Aṅguliyalipi
    10. S'akārilipi
    11. Brahmavallilipi
    12. Draviḍalipi
    13. Kanārilipi
    14. Dakṣiṇalipi
    15. Ugralipi
    16. Samkhyālipi
    17. Anulomalipi
    18. Ūrdhva-dhanurlipi
    19. Daradalipi
    20. Khasyalipi
    21. Cinalipi
    22. Hūṇalipi

Many of the names contained in the lists are identical. Of the several scripts mentioned in them the following four seems to be important and historically true :

1. Brāhmī or Bambhi
2. Kharoṣṭhi or Kharotthi
3. Drāviḍi or Dāmilī
4. Yavanāniya or Yavaṇāḷīya.

In addition to the above, the name of another *Puṣkarasari* or *Pukkharasāriya* is interesting. Pāṇini's grammar, Āpastambha's *Dharmasūtras* and some other works mention *Puṣkarasādi* or *Pauṣkarasādi* as one of the many ancient teachers of the *Dharmaśāstras* and *Vyakarṇa*. It is possible to infer from this that *Puṣkarasādi* was the alphabet newly invented or an existing one modified by Puṣkarasādi, who was the founder of the school or by a member of the school founded by him.[3]

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23. Madhyakṣaravistāralipi
24. Puṣpalipi
25. Devalipi
26. Nāgalipi
27. Yakṣalipi
28. Gandharvalipi
29. Kinnaralipi
30. Mahoragalipi
31. Asuralipi
32. Garuḍalipi
33. Mṛgacakralipi
34. Cakralipi
35. Vāyumarulipi
36. Bhaumadevalipi
37. Antarikṣalipi
38. Uttarakurudvipalipi
39. Uparagauḍalipi
40. Pūrvavidehalipi
41. Utkṣepalipi
42. Nikṣepalipi
43. Vikṣepalipi
44. Prakṣepalipi
45. Sagaralipi
46. Vajralipi
47. Lekha pratilekhalipi
48. Anudrutalipi
49. S'āstrāvartalipi
50. Gaṇāvartalipi
51. Utkṣepāvartalipi
52. Vikṣepāvartalipi
53. Pādalikhitalipi
54. Dviruttarapada-sandhilikhitalipi
55. Das'ottarapada-sandhilikhitalipi
56. Adhyāhāripilipi
57. Sarvarutsamgrahaṇilipi
58. Vidyānulomalipi
59. Vimiśritalipi
60. Ṛṣitapastaptalipi
61. Dharaṇiprekṣaṇalipi
62. Sarvauṣadhaniṣyandalipi
63. Sarvasārasamgrahaṇilipi
64. Sarvabhūtarudgrahaṇilipi

3. There is also a work called *Puṭkaram* (i.e. *Puṣkaram*) in Tamil verse dealing with certain tantric or yogic practices and signifying mystic values to some of the letters of the alphabet. Very likely the system might have been one dealing with the mystic values of the alphabet.

Of the four scripts mentioned above *Yavanāniya* is evidently the script of the Yavanas or Greeks and identical with *Yavanāni* mentioned by Pāṇini and explained as such by his commentator Patañjali.[4] Kharoṣṭhi is the name of the script written from right to left and used in the north-western parts of India (more or less in the region covered by modern Pakistan) before the fourth century A.D. after which it disappeared completely. Brāhmī is the name of the script which was prevalent practically throughout India including the region where the Kharoṣṭhi was used simultaneously and running from left to right. All the modern scripts of India are derivatives of this script by evolution. The inscriptions of Aśoka are the best examples of this variety.

The remaining one, the *Drāviḍi* or *Damili* script should, as suggested by its very nomenclature, be the script used for writing the early Dravidian language. The existing Tamil script as well as the one that has disappeared, the Vaṭṭeḻuttu, used for writing the Tamil language in the inscriptions are themselves derivatives of the Brāhmī script. No specimens of any other independent script which can be shown as having been used for writing the Tamil language once upon a time and since disappeared have yet been recovered. Dr. Bühler thinks that the variety of the Brāhmī script incised on the relic caskets recovered from Bhaṭṭiprolu in the Krishna District in the Andhra Pradesh showing peculiarities not met with any where else represents the *Drāviḍi* type. Before examining this claim and the special features exhibited by this type, it is necessary to know what the Tamil sources themselves say about the art of writing.

Tamil is a very old language claiming great antiquity. Even during the earliest known period of the history of South India we find that it was a highly developed language with its grammer fully worked to the minutest detail. But unfortunately the earliest extant literature is not much, though there are indications to show that there was a vast literature, stray references to which are found in later works. The extant works are principally some anthologies of

4. 4.1.49. It is explained by Kātyāyana as *Yavanalipyam*. Patañjali says: *Yavanalipyāmiti vaktavyam Yavanāni lipiḥ*.

poems by different authors. It is not clear whether these poems were stray pieces or parts of bigger works, the names and nature of which are unknown. There are also the twin epics, the *Śilappadikaram* and the *Maṇimēkalai* and also the celebrated *Tirukkuṟaḷ*. Scholars are not agreed about the age of these works, some holding that these works collectively known as the Śangam works are assignable to the first few centuries of the Christian era, a few dating them even earlier in the pre-Christian era, and some others being inclined to push the limit to a later period, *i.e.*, the fifth or sixth century A. D. All of them recognise that there are certain poems, as in the collection of the *Puṟanāṉūṟu*, which prove that the extant Śangam works clearly bear evidence of the impact of Sanskrit literature and also of the culture associated with it, *i.e.*, the Vedic and Āryan culture.

The early literary works in Tamil contain references to the art of writing in South India. The *Tirukkuṟaḷ* opens with the couplet[5]:

agaramudaleḻuttellam ādi
bhagavaṉ mudaṟṟe yulagu

"All the letters (of the alphabet) begin from the letter *a* (*agaram*); the world begins from the Lord, the first creator, Ādi (Bhagavān).

Another couplet compares the two, the letters and the numerals (writing and arithmetic), to the two eyes of a man.[6]

eṇṇeṉbav ēṉai yeḻutteṉbav ivviraṇḍum
kaṇṇeṉba vāḻum uyirkku.

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5. I. 1.

6. In the *Śilappadikāram* it is mentioned that the articles of merchandise imported at the port of Kāvarippūmpaṭṭiṉam were marked with *Kaṇṇeḻuttu*:

irupadiṉāyiraṅ kaṇṇeḻuttup paḍuttana
kaipuṉai śakaṭamum. (XXVI. 135.36.)

In another place royal scribes are called *Kaṇṇeḻuttāḷar*

kaṇṇeḻuttāḷar kāval vendaṉ
maṇṇuḍai muḍangalam maṇṇavarkkaḷittāngu. (XXVI. 170-71.)

M. Raghava Ayyangar explains *Kaṇṇeḻuttu* as visual writing and suggests that it was some form of picture writing (*Ārāiccittoguti*, pp. 140.41.) More probably it means only superscription. The Aṟumpadauraikkārar says that the *Kaṇṇeḻuttāḷar* were the *Tirumuga-meḻuduvōr*, those who superscribed addresses on letters. It may also

The *Tolkāppiyam* is the earliest of the extant Tamil grammatical works. According to tradition it was composed by Tolkāppiyar, one of the disciples of Agattiyar, who is considered to be the same as Agastya of the North Indian tradition and associated with the spread of Aryan culture in the south and the spread of Indian culture in foreign lands, particularly in South-East Asia. Agastya is said to have learnt the Tamil language from God Śiva himself and taught it to twelve of his disciples of whom Tolkāppiyar was one, the other eleven being Ataṅ-koṭṭāśāṉ, Turāliṅgaṉ, Śempūtcei, Vaiyāpikaṉ, Vāippiyaṉ, Paṉampāraṉār, Kaḻārambaṉ, Avinalaṉ, Kākkaippāḍiṉiyaṉ, Naṟṟattaṉ and Vāmaṉaṉ. Of them Paṉampāraṉār has written the *pāyiram* or the introductory stanza (preface) to the *Tolkāppiyam*. It is said therein that the *Tolkāppiyam* was written by Tolkāppiyaṉār after a careful study of the earlier treatises on Tamil grammar on the model of *Aindram* (*Aindiram niṟainda*) dealing with the Tamil language current both in literature and usage in the Tamil country extending from Tirupati in the north to Cape Comorin in the south, and that it was first read in the court of a Pāṇḍya king.[8] for recognition in the immediate presence of the grammarian Ataṅ-kōṭṭāśāṉ.[9]

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be noted that though *Kaṇṇeḻuttu* may be strained to be taken to be visual writing, even alphabetic writing also may be taken to be visual writing.

The *Jīvakacintāmaṇi*, admittedly a late work, refers to a letter written in the *Karanteḻuttu* (X. 1667). This has been taken by some to mean some sort of secret writing or *gūḍhalekha*. But from the gloss supplied by Naccinārkkiṉiar it does not appear to be a separate kind of letter or alphabetic system, not even a secret code or cipher system. Naccinārkkiṉiyar says:

eḻuttai karantu eḻutiṉaṉ... ... ...
avveḻuttarindālum piṟar vasilādapaḍi eḻudiṉar.

8. Naccinārkkiṉiyar, says that the king was Nilantarutiruviṟ Pāṇḍya (*Tolkāppiyam, Naccinarkkiṉiyar Eḻuttadikāram Payira uṟai*, p. 9.)

He was variously known as Vaḍimbalambaniṉṟa Pāṇḍya, Neḍiyōṉ, Pāṇḍyaṉ mākirtti etc. (See T. V. S. Pandarattar, *Paṇḍiyar Varalāṟu*, p. 5.)

9. Mayilainātar one of the commentators on the *Naṉṉūl* says that Avinayiṉār, evidently another of the twelve disciples of Agastya, wrote a treatise on Tamil grammar and that it was commented upon by Rāja pavittira Pallavadaraiyaṉ. But neither the treatise nor the commentary is available now. The names of the co.disciples are known to us only from stray references found in the works of others.

The *Tolkappiyam* is a compact and methodical treatise. Apart from the statement by Paṉamparaṉār in the *payiram* that the author had studied the earlier treatises (*mundunūl kaṇḍu*), there are also internal evidences in several places in the work itself indicating the existence of previous works on the subject. Some of the *sūtras* have close parallels (which may be taken even as translations from one or the other) in the (Vedic) *Pratiśākhyas*, the *Nirukta* of *Yāska*, the *Śikṣa* and the *Aṣṭādhyāyi* of Pāṇini or those of his predecessors in Sanskrit. Similarly there are strong differences also. It is said that when the *Aṣṭādhyāyi* gained popularity, it ousted all the eight treatises on Sanskrit grammar. Paṉamparaṉār says that Tolkāppiyar was well versed in *Aindram* (*Aindiram niṟainda Tolkappiyam*). It is considered that the *Aindra* was one of the eight schools of Sanskrit grammar, ousted by Pāṇini. But curiously enough, Pāṇini, who mentions several previous authors, nowhere mentions Indra as one of them. The only reference which connects Indra with Sanskrit grammar is found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* where it is said that he studied Sanskrit grammar word by word under Bṛhaspati for one thousand celestial years and was not able to complete it.[10] There is striking correspondence between the *Katantra* and the *Tolkāppiyam* in respect of arrangement of topics and use of technical terms such as *vibhakti* (*vēṟṟumai*), *dirgha* (*neḍil*), *hrasva* (*kuṟil*) etc. From this Dr. Burnell infers that the *Tolkāppiyam* follows the *Kātantra* and the *Pratiśakhyas.*[11] But it must be noted that the *Kātantra* grammar is associated with Śarvavarman, the minister of the Śatavāhana king mentioned in the *Bṛhat-katha* and said to belong to the first century after Christ.[12] If really Tolkāppiyar had followed the *Kātantra* school in his grammar, certainly Panamparaṉār would have indicated that as *Kātantiram niṟainda* and not as *Aindiṟam niṟainda*.

The absence of any reference associating Indra with any grammatical work has led some scholars to doubt the correctness

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10. *Bṛhaspatiḥ Indraya divyam varṣa.sahasram pratipadoretānām śabdānām śabdapārāyaṇam pravacanāntam jagama.*

11. *Aindra school of Sanskrit Grammarians*, p. 8.

12. *Systems of Sanskrit Grammar*, p. 83.

of the statement. But in Tamil there are some clear indications of such association. Sēṉāvarayar in his commentary on *Sūtra* 75 of the *Śolladikāram* of the *Tolkāppiyam* quotes the following :

> *ēḷiyiṉ muṟaiya ṭetirmuka vēṟṟumai*
> *vēṟeṉa viḷambāṉ peyaratu vikārameṉ*
> *ṟōdiya pulavaṉa muḷynoṟu vagaiyāl*
> *intira neṭṭaṉ vēṟṟumai yeṉṟaṉaṉ.*

This is also quoted by Śankara Namaśśivāya Pulavar in his commentary on the *Naṉṉūl*. According to this there was also another scholar who had stated that there were only seven cases, taking the vocative *viḷivēṟṟumai* case as only a variant of the nominative case (*peyar alladu mudal vēṟṟūmai*), but that Indra had taken that as the eighth case. All the extant grammars in Tamil, including the *Tolkāppiyam*, speak only of eight cases. In Sanskrit, Pāṇini mentions only seven cases, not treating the vocative case as a separate one. M. Raghava Ayyangar thinks that the scholar mentioned in the above quotation and who recognised only seven cases should be taken to be Pāṇini.[13] The above statement is ascribed to Agastya. But the language and the reference to the vocative case as the eighth case, even though Tolkāppiyar mentions it as *viḷivēṟṟumai*, do not indicate such an early date. Anyway the reference to Indra as the author of a grammar is interesting.[14]

It is generally said that the *Tolkāppiyam* is followed by the Śangam works, with regard to grammatical usages. But we find therein many usages which are not sanctioned by the rules contained in the *Tolkappiyam* and even prohibited. We also find a large number of usages sanctioned by the *Tolkāppiyam* fallen out of use and some even viewed with disfavour. There are a few words which were current during the days of the *Tolkāppiyam* but subsequently fell out of use. Among them were, for instance, *mūḍu* and *kaḍama* which meant the female of the sheep or goat.[15]

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13. *Arāiccit toguti*, p. 84.

14. *Mudal vēṟṟumai* and *eṭṭām vēṟṟumai* are considered by Dr. P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri as late terms. (See his *History of Grammatical Theories*, p. 109.)

15. *Mūḍum kaḍamaiyum yāḍalpeṟa* (*Tolk. Poruḷadikāram*, *Sūtra*, 619).

We also find some usages in the *Tolkappiyam*, which even in the days of its author, were becoming rare and which, though not proper, should be taken as correct on account of their long usage, eg., *aṇkutirai* (male horse) being called *ṣeval*.[16]

These would indicate that some time, obviously a few centuries, must have elapsed between the period of the *Tolkappiyam* and of the Sangam works. According to tradition the *Tolkappiyam* was written during the period of the second Sangam (*iḍaiccangam*), while the majority, if not the entire body of the works known as the Sangam works, belong to the third (*kaḍaiccangam*). Considering the scholastic orthodoxy and conservatism of the scholars one may not be far wrong if the period of the *Tolkappiyam* is fixed somewhere about the second half of the first millennium B.C. if not earlier.

The grammatical works do not generally make any reference to written forms of the alphabet. The same is the case with the Tamil grammatical works which simply state that all letters are of the age-old forms (of distant past).[17] But curiously enough the *Tolkappiyam*, the earliest Tamil grammar, refers incidentally to the written forms of certain letters. Among them a few deserve mention.

The addition of dots: Tolkāppiyar says that all consonants have dots added to them. (*meyyin iyaṟkai puḷḷiyōṭu nilaiyal*).[18] In fact he refers to the consonants in some places merely by the appellation of *puḷḷi* or dot (eg.), *ya ra ḻa veṉṉumpuḷḷi*: the consonants *y r* and *ḻ*; *ta ṟa la ḷa veṉṉumpuḷḷi*: the consonants *ṭa ṟa la* and *ḷa*.[19] Again he states that *e* and *o* have dots added to them (*ekara okarat tiyaṟkaiyum aṟṟē*): The nature of *e* and *o* are the same.[20] This follows the *sutra* relating to the dots for consonants mentioned above. Thus the *nature* referred to in this *sutra* is the addition of a dot mentioned in the previous *sutra*.

16. See M. Raghava Ayyangar "*Tolkāppiyappaḻayavaḻakkugaḷ*" in his *Āraiccit toguti*.

17. *Nannūl, Eḻuttadikaram, Uruvam*, 98.

18. *Eḻuttadikāram, Sūtra*, 15.

19. *Sūtras*, 29, 23 etc.

20. *Sūtra*, 16.

Tolkāppiyar also says that the further shortened *m* has a dot within (the body of its form): *makarak-kuṟukkam.*[21]

He further says that the quantity of *m* is shortened to quarter of a *matra* (time taken for one wink of the eyes or one snap of the fingers)[22] when it follows some consonants. And in another *sūtra* he says *uṭperupuḷḷi yuruvāgummē*[23], that the symbol of *m* is with a dot within. It follows from this that the pure consonant *m* which is half a *matra* has already a dot, and to distinguish the shortened *m* from the consonant, another dot is added and placed within the form, as there is already one dot by the side. This *sūtra* incidentally conveys the idea that the dots were regularly placed outside the symbols as is generally found in inscriptions.[24]

According to the *Tolkāppiyam* the Tamil alphabet consists of thirty primary sounds (twelve vowels and eighteen consonants) and three secondary ones. This is mentioned in the first *sūtra.* The secondary ones are explained in the next *sutra.* These are *kuṟṟiyalukaram,* further shortened *u kuṟṟiyalikaram* further shortened *i* and *aytam* ∴ Tolkāppiyaṉār uses the term *muppār puḷḷi,* in this connection.[25]

Tolkāppiyar again says that the symbols of all consonants without dots represent the vowel consonants with the inherent *a* and that the symbols for the vowel consonants in respect of other vowels (i.e., the vowels other than *a*) are different (having additional symbols).[26]

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21. *Sūtra,* 14.

22. *Sūtras,* 7 and 13.

23. *Sūtra,* 14.

24. Naccinārkkiṉiyar says that the internal dot is placed not inside *makarakkuṟukkam but makaram.* viz. *mi* (மி) would be written as (மி). But it seems that Naccinārkkiṉiyar is wrong for the context in which the *sūtra uṭperupuḷḷi uruvāgum mē* occurs shows that the author means only *makarakuṟukkam* and not *makaram.*

25. In the second *sūtra* of *nūṉmārapu.eḻuttadikāram (Tolkāppiyam) muppārpuḷḷi* refers only to the *āytaeḻuttu* which is written in the form of three dots ∴ Further *puḷḷi* refers only to *meyyeḻuttu.* Evidently *kuṟṟiyalugaram* and *āyta* are not *meyyeḻuttu,* (*Sūtra,* 2).

26. See M. Raghava Ayyangar's article on '*Tolkāppiyaṉārum puḷḷi-eḻuttukkaḷum*' in his *Ārāiccittogutī.*

It may now be examined how far the grammatical rules laid down in the *Tolkappiyam* were followed in actual writing in the Tamil country in the early centuries of the Christian era. The script, language and grammar followed with regard to Tamil and Prākṛt in the period give us some idea about it.

It has been seen earlier that the Buddhist and Jaina literatures mention the names of several scripts prevalent in the country in early days and that the *Draviḍi* or *Damila* is one of them. Bühler thinks that it "is partly an independent variety of the Brāhmī which recently has become known through the relic vessels from the *stupa* at Bhaṭṭiprolu in the Krishna District."[27] The same scholar while editing the inscriptions incised on these relic caskets points out that "the characters which mostly resemble those of Asoka's inscriptions" show also "peculiarities met with nowhere else."[28] Among them particular mention has been made of the notation of the medial and final vowels, which according to him show two remarkable peculiarities :—

a) "The short *a* is invariably marked by the horizontal stroke to the right of the consonant which denotes long *ā* in the Mauryan alphabet except when an *anusvāra* follows. The latter limitation is probably due to the circumstance that the *anusvāra* was considered equal to *aṁ* in which form it is invariably given in the native lists of *mātṛikas* or alphabets.

b) The long *ā* is usually marked by a horizontal stroke and a vertical hanging down from its end."

He also adds that "in other respects the notation of the medial vowels mainly agrees with that used in Aśoka's inscriptions."[29]

In the Aśokan alphabet, or as a matter of fact in all the scripts in the north, the symbol of a consonant (without the addition of any other sign for the medial vowel) has the short *a* inherent; and a horizontal stroke to the right at the

27. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXIII, (1904), App. p. 2.

28. *Ep Ind.*, Vol. II, p. 323.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

top is added to denote *ā* long. Thus in Aśokan Brāhmī 𑀓 is to be read as *ka* with the short inherent *a* and 𑀓𑀸 as *kā* with the medial vowel *ā* long. But in the alphabet of the Bhaṭṭiprolu records the latter form represents the *ka* with the inherent short a (and not the long one as elsewhere); and another symbol, a vertical stroke hanging at the right end is added to indicate the letter *ā* long. Thus *kā* is written as 𑀓𑀸. So in the scheme of writing found in these records, a consonant without the addition of any symbol of a medial vowel would denote a pure or vowel-less consonant without the inherent *a* short, though no such usage is found there, while in the Aśokan and other alphabets such a pure consonant is not usually written as a separate character, but as a joint character (*dvandvākṣara*) with the succeeding vowelled consonant.[30] Bühler thinks that "the device is not doubt of later origin and has been invented in order to avoid the necessity for ligatures."[31]

The alphabet used in the Brāhmī inscriptions discovered in the Tamil country follows the above scheme of Bhaṭṭiprolu records. This becomes clear from the way in which symbols for the medial vowel *ā* long are added to the consonants in these records. First of all is to be noted that no ligature or *dvandvākṣara* is found in these Brāhmī inscriptions. And in the addition of symbols for the medial vowel of *ā* long two methods have been adopted. While a majority of them have the usual horizontal stroke added to the right at the top, there are also a few having two such symbols added. These are found as two parallel horizontal strokes to the right at the top, instead of a horizontal and a vertical one as at Bhaṭṭiprolu.[32]

It will thus be evident that even in these records the same principle followed in the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscriptions has been

30. No pure or vowelless consonant has been found to occur in the Bhaṭṭiprōlu records and this is probably due to the peculiar nature of the Prākṛt languages used in these records.

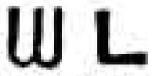
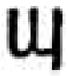
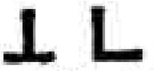
31. *Ind. Ant.*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

32. Evidently the scheme adopted in the Brāhmi inscriptions in the Tamil country is an improvement of the method adopted in the Bhaṭṭiprolu records and as such these records have to be assigned to a period later than those of Bhaṭṭiprolu.

adopted. And accordingly, the consonants without the addition of any symbol should be considered as a pure or vowel-less consonant (without the inherent short *a*); consonants with the addition of a single symbol for the medial vowel denote those with the *a* short or the inherent *a* and those with the addition of two such symbols denote vowelled consonants with the *ā* long.

This method of notation of the medial vowels *a* short and *ā* long is peculiar to the Brāhmī script of South India and not found elsewhere. As surmised by Bühler this was obviously to avoid ligatures in the expression of pure consonants.

As said earlier, the *Tolkāppiyam* specifically lays down that the written form of the character of a pure or vowel-less consonant will have a dot added to it.[33] This principle is followed in writing Tamil even to this day.[34] Thus the pure consonant *k* without the inherent *a* should, according to the *Tolkāppiyam*, be written in the Brāhmī of those days as But the dot above the letter which has not been unknown to the Brāhmī script will denote entirely a different value in the Aśokan alphabet. The dot represents the *anusvāra* and therefore this symbol has to be read as *kam*.

one other peculiarity is also seen occasionally in the Brāhmi inscriptions found in the Tamil country. Sometimes vowelled consonants are not written as one single letter. ie., consonants with the addition of symbols indicative of medial vowels, but as two separate letters with the pure consonants and the basic vowel forms side by side. Thus to denote *yu* we have the symbol for *ya* first and the vowel *u* as  instead of the usual form  with the medial *u* added to the bottom. Similarly we find *nu* written as  with the two symbols of *na* and *u*, *ṭa* written as with the symbols of *ṭa* and *a* etc. These instances strengthen the principle enunciated above that in this scheme the consonant letter without the addition of any vowel sign is to be vowel-less consonant.

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33. See ante p. 117.

34. In epigraphy this is observed only on rare occasions especially in the records of the earlier period. The *puḷḷi* or *virāma* is generally conspicuous by its absence, more so in the inscriptions of later periods.

There are however exceptions. A careful examination of the Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country would show that this scheme is not adopted in all the inscriptions. Those found at Māmaṇḍūr, Pugaḻūr, Kuṉṉakkuḍi etc. do not adopt this notation. The values of *a*, both long and short, to be assigned in these records are those found normally in other records and not the specialised ones mentioned above. Most probably this is due to the fact that chronologically they were later.

We may, before leaving the subject, also note another interesting reference to the varieties of scripts found in the grammatical works in Tamil.

The old commentary (circa 11th century A.D.) on the *Yapparunkalam*, a work on Tamil prosody, while commenting on the last *sūtra* of the work, dealing with what a scholar should be familiar with, mentions various kinds of writing and quotes the following *sūtras*.

> *uruvē uṇarve oliyē taṉmaiyeṉa*
> *iruvagai yeḻuttum irandāgum.*

The *ēḻuttu* (letters or writing) is divided into four kinds, *uru, uṇarvu, oli* and *taṉmai*, the first two forming one group and the second another.

> *kāṇappaṭṭa vuruvamellām*
> *maṇakkaṭṭum vagaimai nāḍi*
> *vaḻivilōviyaṉ kaiviṉaipōla*
> *eḻudappaḍuvatu uruveḻuttāgum.*

This *sūtra* describes the first variety *uruveḻuttu* "That which is written like the handiwork of a faultless artist (painter) by way of portraying in a grand manner the pictures of all objects just as seen is *uruveḻuttu.*"

The definition of the second *uṇarveḻuttu* is given as follows :

> *koṇḍa-v-ōr kuṟiyāl koṇḍa-v-ataṉai*
> *uṇḍeṉ ṟ-uṇarttuvadu uṇarveḻuttu āgum.*

"That which signifies the existence of an object conceived (by drawing) a sign or symbol conventionalised to denote the same is *uṇarveḻuttu.* This stage may be taken to be the same as the second stage in the evolution of writing mentioned above (hieroglyphic).

The third *sūtra* is:

> *iśai-p-padu, puḷḷineḻaal-pōla-c*
> *cevip-pulaṉ-āvadu oli-y-eḻuttagum.*

That which is audible to the ear like the musical note of a sweet singing bird is *oli eḻuttu.*

It may be seen from the above that it signifies the sound sign or syllabic symbol.

The last is:

> *mutaṟ kāraṇamum tuṇaik-kāraṇamum*
> *tuṇaik-kāraṇattōḍu toḍariya-v-uṇarvum*
> *avaṟṟōḍu puṇarnda-v-agatteḻu vaḷiyiṉ*
> *miḍaṟṟu-p-pirant-iśaippadu taṉmai y eḻuttu.*

That sound which is born in the neck (throat) by the air produced (or raised) from the inside (of the body in the effort) combined with the primary cause, the secondary cause and the sense perception associated with the secondary cause is the *taṉmai eḻuttu.*

The definition of the first *uruveḻuttu* clearly indicates that the author intended to convey the ideas of picture writing by that *sūtra,* while the definition of the second indicates the next stage in the evolution of writing, namely the heiroglyphs.

The third, *oli eḻuttu* indicates the sound sign or syllabic symbol and the last *taṉmai eḻuttu* gives the definition one usually finds in the grammars for the alphabetic characters.[35]

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35. The Tamil *nighaṇṭu Divākaram* assigned to the eighth century A.D., contains the following:

> *peyar eḻuttu muḍiv.eḻuttu vaḍiv-eḻuttut-taṉmai*
> *eḻutteṉa v.eḻuttiṉ peyar iyambinarē.*

The *Piṅgaḷandai*, another *nighaṇṭu* has the following:

> *vaḍivu peyar taṉmai muḍivu naṉkeḻuttu.*

Thus both the *nighaṇṭus* contain reference to all the varieties namely *vaḍivu* (form) *peyar* (name) *taṉmai* (nature or quality) and *muḍivu* (finite). The only difference among them is with regard to the order in which they are mentioned. But they differ from the four varieties quoted by the commentator of the *Yāpparunkalam*.

A later work, the commentary of Mayilainātar on the Tamil grammar *Naṉṉūl* quotes another set of *sūtras* which are also

It is not known where from the commentator extracted these *sūtras* for quotation, as also who their author was.

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quoted in the *pāyiram* (introduction) by Ārumuga Nāvalar, the Editor of the *Ilakkaṇak-kottu* of Svāminātha Dēśikar (17th century). The names of the four divisions as given in the introduction are *vaḍivu, peyar, taṉmai* and *muḍivu*. The *sūtras* mentioning them are as follows:

vaḍivu.peyar taṉmai-yuṉ muḍivu nāṉka
naḍaiperu nāvalar naḍiya-v-eḻuttē

The *eḻuttu* or writing sought after by *Nāvalar*, the masters of the tongue (i.e. poets or scholars), are of four kinds, *vaḍivu, peyar, taṉmai* and (*uṉ*) *muḍivu*.

The definition of the word *vaḍiveḻuttu* is given as

kaṭpulaṉ illā.k.kaḍavuḷaik-kaṭṭum
saṭṭakam pōla-c-cevippula v-oliyai
uṭkoḷark-iḍum urubām vaḍiveḻuttē

The *vaḍiveḻuttu* is the form (picture) given to bring to mind the sound audible (to the ear) like the form given to denote the god not perceptible to the eye.

The next variety, *peyar*, is defined as

vaḍivu mudaṉ mummaiyiṉ vaḻaṅgum eḻuttir
paḍu pala pakuttikk-iḍupeyar peyarē.

The *peyar-eḻuttu* is the name given to the several component parts of the three varieties of letters (of writing) current in three-fold (varieties) beginning with *vaḍivu*.

The third variety is the *taṉmai y-eḻuttu* which is defined as:

tāṉa muyaṟci tarakkoḷac-cevippulaṉ
āya-v-oli taṉmai-y-eḻuttu-agummē

The *taṉmai-y-eḻuttu* is the sound which is audible to the ear and produced with the place (*sthāna*) and effort.
The last one, the *uṉmuḍiveḻuttu* is defined as:

uruvamuduṉ mummaiyōḍ oṉṟiya.v-iyalpai
maruva-v-uḷaṉ tuṇivad-uṉmuḍiv-eḻuttē.

The (*uṉ*)*muḍi-v-eḻuttu* is that which is decided in mind in combination of the nature united with the three fold (qualities) beginning with the form (*vaḍivu*).

The above *sūtras* are obviously explanatory of the four kinds of *eḻuttu* mentioned in the *nigaṇṭus* referred to above. But the author of the *Ilakkoṇak kottu* merely says *akaravuyirā-nadu uruveḻuttu, oli-eḻuttu, uyir eḻuttu taṉmai eḻuttu eṉṟu poruḷ kūṟiṉ uvamēyllōḍu māṟupaḍutal olippala kūṟṟappaḍum.* He does not approve of the four fold classification on the ground that Tolkāppiyar does not mention it. i.e. *eḻuttukkaṭkuppilakkaṇam Tolkappiyareḍuttōdiyavaṟṟaippulappaḍa aṟindirundum piṟar avaṟṟiṟku māṟupaḍa kūṟiṉār*

But one thing seems clear. Their author was quite familiar with the different stages in the evolution of the art of writing, and very likely they were in use in some form or other. The classical literatnre in Sanskrit and various other languages so far made available do not contain any reference to them.[36]

In that way the stray references to pre-historic and pictographic writings in ancient Tamil literature is unique and interesting.[37]

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36. It may be mentioned in this connection that the Sanskrit grammars describe four phases of speech sound, *parā*, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā* and *vaikharī*.

"parā being the phase of the *Śabda-brahman* undifferentiated primordial sound manifested at *mūlādhāra* or sacred plexus, *paśyanti* being that phase which is manifested at the navel and which is cognisable to yogins, *madhyama* being that phase which is manifested at the heart and *vaikharī* being that phase which is manifested at the vocal organs as the articulated sound." (See P. S. Subrahamanya Sastri, *History of Grammatical Theories*, p. IV.) But it must be noted here that these are not the ones described in the *sūtras* quoted above.

37. [*ma ka ṭu u, a, piṭi, kumari, kaṇṇi, piṇavu, muṭuvaṉ eṉṟiṉṉa śilaveḻuttum*] *a ka ca ṭa ta pa ya mutaliya vāya veḻuttum, a ca la va ra ṅa ya mutaliya irāci eḻuttum, kārttikai mutaliya nāḷeḻuttum tōpa mutaliya nal vakai eḻuttum, cāti mutaliya taṉmai eḻuttum, uccāṭaṇa mutaliya ukkira eḻuttum, cittirakāruṭam mutaliya muttiṟa eḻuttum, pākiyal mutaliya nalvakai eḻuttum, puttēḷ mutaliya nāṟkati eḻuttum, tātu mutaliya oli eḻuttum, māka maṭaiyam mutaliya śankēta eḻuttum, kali mutaliya śankēta eḻuttum, pārppāṉ vaḻakkākiya patiṉ mūṉṟeḻuttum, eṉṟu ittoṭakkattaṉavam kaṭṭurai eḻuttum, vacchira mutaliya vaṭiveḻuttum, maṟṟum palavagaiyāṟ kāṭṭappaṭṭa ellā eḻuttum vallār vāy k kēṭka.*

The *āya-eḻuttu* like *ā, ka, ca, ṭa, ta, pa,* and *ya*; the *irāśi-eḻuttu* like *a, ca, la, va, ra, ṅa,* and *ya*; the *nāḷ-eḻuttu* like the *karttikai*; the four kinds of letters like *tōpam*, the *taṉmai* letters like the *cāti*; the *ugra* letters like the *uccāṭaṇam*, the *muttira-v-eḻuttu* like the *cittira kāruṭam*, the four kinds of letters like the *pākiyal*; the *nārkati* letters like the *puttēḷ*; the *oli-y-eḻuttu* like the *tātu*; the *śaṅkēta* letters like the *mākta-maṭaiyam*; the *śaṅkēta* letters like the *kali*; thirteen letters of the *parppāṉvaḻakku* (Brāhmaṇa usage); and so forth (commencing with this) the *kaṭṭurai-y-eḻuttu* the *vaḍiv-eḻuttu* like the *vacciram* (*vajra*) and all the other letters denoted in so many ways, learn (or should be learnt) through the (mouths) of experts.

A careful comparison of this with the lists of the varieties of scripts mentioned in the Jaina and Buddhist works will show

that many names are identical and both of them are complimentary to one another. The Tamil commentary mentions fifteen varieties, the first thirteen being placed in one group, and the last two in another group. Of the last two, *kaṭṭurai eḻuttu* would represent the writing of the figuritive language or pithy, sententious expression, while the other would evidently denote the *vajralipi*, some kind of pictograph.

It is not easy to explain what the first thirteen varieties of scripts were. The first among them, the *āya eḻuttu* which is probably connected with the word *āyam*, meaning income, may be taken to represent the symbols or signs marked on merchandise on which tolls or customs duties were leviable. *Irāśieḻuttu* may probably be connected with the sciences of astronomy and astrology and taken as the symbols or signs of the zodiacal houses, while the *nāḷeḻuttu* may be considered to be the symbols or signs of the stars of the stellar constellation. The word *tōpam* is obviously the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word *sthoba* and denotes the additional sound in using the *Sāmaveda*. Thus these would indicate the marks used to regulate the chanting, like *udātta*, *anudātta*, *svarita* and *pracaya*. The word *taṉmai* which means quality was probably a symbol by which various things were classified according to their nature. The *ugra eḻuttu* evidently represents some mystic symbol or sign used in Tantric literature. *Muttiṟa.v-eḻuttu* would probably denote the artistic expression of the hands (*mudras*) in dancing and music. The *pakiyal* seems to have been the name of the language of the *mahauts* in training elephants. *Puttēḷ* probably stood for a symbol that denoted a script of the celestials. *Dhatu* was apparently some kind of secret writing which could be made visible with the help of some minerals. *Śanketa* meant some form of cryptic writing or code writing. The thirteen letters of the Brāhmaṇa usage evidently refer to the thirteen letters (surd consonants) of the Sanskrit grammar and referred to as *aghoṣa*.

(For a fuller discussion see T. N. Subramanyan, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, pt. ii, Appendix, The Tamil Palaeography, pp. 1580—86, which I have largely followed in this Section).

It will appear that these varieties of letters denote special symbols or signs used to indicate technical terms, special sounds used in arts and sciences and not included in the Tamil alphabet. Even now many symbols are used in Tamil writing. The existence of similar ones in earlier days in the Tamil country is seen clearly from inscriptions.

It may also be pointed out in this connection that the word *eḻuttu* in Tamil not only denotes the script, letter and writing but also painting. In fact there are a number of references in classical Tamil literature where the word *eḻuttu* has been used to indicate painting. (See, for instance, *Paripāḍal* 19, 53; *Kuṟuntogai*, 89). It will be seen from this that the ancient Tamils treated painting as a variety or form of writing.

CHAPTER IV

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS

The existence of lithic records incised in the Brāhmī script in North India and the Deccan has been known for a very long time. Even as early as the fourteenth century A.D. when Firoz Shah Tughlak shifted the Aśokan pillars from Topra and Meerut to Delhi, it is said, he invited a number of Sanskrit scholars to read the writings on the pillars, but they were not able to decipher their script. It is also said that Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, was inquisitive about the writings on the pillars and that his attempts to have them read met with no better result. And it was only a little over a hundred years ago that the mystery of the script of the Aśokan edicts was unravelled by western scholars like Ch. Lassen and James Princep in the fourth decade of the last century, and that forms the foundation of our knowledge of the ancient art of writing, language and history of India. But the provenance of early records written in the Brāhmī script in the Tamil country was not known till the beginning of the present century when the first Brāhmī inscription was found in 1903 in the cavern at Kiḷavaḷavu in the Madurai District and copied by the officers of the Epigrahpical Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India. But the importance of the record was not realised immediately. Three years later, in 1906, L. A. Commiade, a Civil Servant in the District of Tirunelveli, reported the discovery of another cavern with Brāhmī inscriptions at Marugāḷtalai. This prompted the making of vigorous attempts to trace similar caverns with Brāhmī inscriptions in other parts of the Tamil country; and it bore ample fruit. The majority of the short Brāhmī inscriptions under study in this book were discovered in the southern districts of the Tamil country in the next five or six years by the officers of the Epigraphical Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India.

The discovery of these records created for them a difficult problem, namely their decipherment and interpretation. The script in which these label inscriptions were incised had been known to them for long, and as such there was not much difficulty for them in transcribing a major portion of them in the modern script. There were, however, a few symbols peculiar to these records neither seen in the Brāhmī inscriptions found in

other parts of the country, nor included in the standard script with its value definitely settled. Copies of the records were also sent to scholars outside for study and interpretation. H. Krishna Sastri even thought it worth drawing public attention to these records by publishing photographic copies of the ink-impressions of the inscriptions in the Annual Reports on South Indian Epigraphy for the years 1912, 1915 and 1918. In order to stimulate fresh inquiry and study in this direction he induced Rama Prasad Chandra, then Honorary Secretary of the Varendra Research Society "to take up these Brāhmī documents of South India for study and make an attempt, however slight it may be, to interpret them."

These attempts did not produce any result worth mentioning. "Careful readings directly from stone and from estampages were prepared on the spot of almost all such records as had been collected by the department." Finally Krishna Sastri himself gave his own readings of these short epigraphs in a paper which he contributed to the first All-India Oriental Conference held at Poona in 1919, which he concluded with the request that these inscriptions might be taken up for earnest study and interpretation. In his readings of these inscriptions he assigned to the new symbols found in them, the values of the signs very nearly resembling them in the standard Brahmī or their variations employed in inscriptions in other parts of the country, drawing at the same time pointed attention to them either in the body of his paper or in foot-notes. He also induced K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, another senior member of his Department to take up the study of these inscriptions.

The long experience of K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar in the Department, particularly in handling the Tamil records as also their preliminary study by H. Krishna Sastri, were of immense help to him in his examination of these records. According to him these inscriptions followed the Brāhmī script employed in the records recovered from Bhaṭṭiprolu. With commendable ingenuity he was able, apparently after great labour, to fix the values of the new symbols which had baffled scholars previously as those of the letters peculiar to the Tamil language and he was the first scholar to recognise that the inscriptions were written in the Tamil language. He read and interpreted the records as written

in the Tamil language and presented to the Third All-India Oriental Conference held at Madras in 1924 a paper embodying the results of his study.

But his conclusions were not fully endorsed by scholars. Some were not agreeable to or rather convinced of the possibility of these records being written in the Tamil language. Their main objection appeared to be that while all the inscriptions of the period written in the Brāhmī script and found in other parts of the country were composed in the Prakṛt language, how could it be possible for these records alone to be composed in Tamil? Further the Tamil language employed for writing these records as read, explained and interpreted, did not have much resemblance to standard diction and could be understood only with some emendations. The idea that these inscriptions also must have been written only in the Prākṛt language was strong in the minds of some scholars. C. Narayana Rao took their language definitely as Prākṛt, restored them in Sanskrit and endeavoured to explain them in a paper presented to the Tenth All-India Oriental Conference held at Tirupati in 1940 and wrote a paper on the same in the first number of the now defunct *New Indian Antiquary*.[1]

However, it must be noted here that the reading, restoration in Sanskrit and interpretation of the inscriptions by Narayana Rao are not at all convincing, seem to be far fetched and in very many cases are not applicable to the area, period and the people who were supposed to be the authors of these inscriptions, or for whom they were intended. Further, he had taken only the tentative readings of H. Krishna Sastri as the basis, and treated them as final for his interpretation, ignoring the hesitancy and warnings of the original reader of the inscriptions. Further the Prākṛt language envisaged by him as used in these epigraphs is quite different from the inscriptional Prākṛt of the period and not found anywhere else.

In spite of the distinct contribution made by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar to a study of these enigmatic inscriptions it should be said that his interpretation of them is defective for two reasons:

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1. pp. 362-76.

(i) Even though he has traced in these records the influence of the scheme of writing adopted in the inscriptions of Bhaṭṭiprolu he has not used that system in fixing the values of individual letters. It is true that this system does not help in reading all the records. Some of them could be satisfactorily read only if the standard values of the Brāhmī symbols are applied to them and are unintelligible if the values of the Bhaṭṭiprolu or Drāviḍi type are assigned, while the others will become clear only when they are read in the Drāviḍi style. This will necessarily show that these records are of two different types and probably belong to two different periods chronologically. However, when he studied these records it was generally held, mainly on palaeographical evidence, comparing the forms occurring in these with those in other Brāhmī inscriptions, particularly from North India, that they belonged to the third century B.C., the period of Aśoka. The inscribed potsherds recovered from Arikamēḍu near Pondicherry in the course of the excavations at the place in 1945 and from Uraiyūr in Tiruchirapalli in the course of the excavations at the place in 1965 both assigned to the first century A.D. or thereabouts from reliable evidence were obtained only longafter. Similarly the inscriptions in the Brāhmī script, found at Pugaliyūr in the Tiruchirapalli District and the Mamaṇḍur in the North Arcot District and closely resembling those of the inscribed potsherds from Arikamēḍu were also found and copied only later. These discoveries would clearly show that all the Brāhmī inscriptions recovered in the Tamil country so far do not belong to the same period and that there were differences among them with regard to their chronology. Further it is possible to envisage an evolution in the method of writing in the Brāhmī script in the Tamiḻ country, some of the records adopting the Drāviḍi style and some others not. If such a hypothesis is accepted, the reading and interpretation of the records would have become much easier and more acceptable.

(ii) K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar has not also pressed into service the knowledge derived from a study of the classical Tamil literature. Any study of the epigraphical material should utilise and not ignore the early literature in the language in which such epigraphical materials are found. Some of the expressions found in the Brāhmī records in the Tamil country are better understood and explained by reference to classical Tamil literature.

At the stage it is necessary to know in detail the special features of the script used in the inscriptions found at Bhaṭṭiprolu or the Drāviḍi style of the southern Brāhmī as it is otherwise called and their bearings on the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country.

In this connection two important question may be considered viz., the language of these records and the object and nature of their contents.

(i) All these records are found in natural caverns high up on the summit or the slopes of hills made suitable for human occupation. They are incised either on the beds in the caverns or on the brows of the overhanging boulders or walls, and are mostly of single or double lines consisting of a few letters. The situation and length of these records would indicate that they are either dedicatory or donative. We have the records of Daśaratha,[2] the grandson and successor of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka, dedicating the caverns excavated in the Nāgārjunī hill in Bihar to the monks of the Ājīvika sect for use during rainy season. Similar records are found also in other parts of India. On the northern border of the Tamil country there is a record at Malakoṇḍa in the Nellore District in Andhra Pradesh.[3] In Ceylon are found a large number of similar records,[4] some of which have been edited in the volumes of the *Epigraphia Zeylanica*. All these Ceylonese records mention the dedication or donation of the cave to the monks of religious sects for their use during the rainy season and for doing meditation or penance. The Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country also should likewise be taken as mentioning the dedication of these caverns and beds for the use of religious monks and their penance.

In addition to the followers of the Vedic religion, followers of other religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, as also the Ājīvikas had come to the south even before the beginning of the Christian era and had settled in South India obviously with substantial following among the masses. One of the *Tēvāram* hymns derides

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2. *Ind. Ant.* Vol. XX, pp. 364; *Ep. Ind.* Vol. X, Luders' List Nos. 954-956.
3. This is given as an appendix at the end.
4. See *Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. I, pp. 78-95.

for instance the heretics of those days as *puṟṟ-ēri-y-uṇaṅkuvār*,[5] those who (suffer pain and) wither away, climbing the natural crevices (high up on the hill). This would imply that those who lived in these caverns were not the followers of the Vedic religion but those who professed the heretical faiths, Buddhism, Jainism or the Ājīvika one.

It is not clearly known if these labels are dedicatory or donative in nature, whether they mention the donor or the donee. It is usual that in such inscriptions or labels, the names of the persons who donated or dedicated the object are given. The names of the donees, whether those of individuals or religious sects or even of some gods, are at times given, but not always. In such cases the names of the donees alone would not have been given, without those of the donors. It is the common tendency among donors to take some pride and satisfation in making such offerings and inscribing their names to show to the world that they were responsible for them. In most of these Brāhmī labels there are found some personal names. These names may be those of either the donors or the donees, very likely those of the former, as many of them contain only single names. Therefore it may not be wrong if it is presumed that these labels mostly contain the names of the donors or persons responsible for the donation of the caves, sometimes accompanied by the names of the persons to whom they were made. But it is to be understood that the donors of these caverns to the teachers of one religious faith need not invariably be the followers of that faith. It is possible that the followers of one faith for could have made donation to the followers of another faith for some reason or other. That would show the popularity of the teachers and the esteem in which they were held by the people. In Ceylon, for instance, there are instances of Brahmans making such donations to the Buddhist organisation.[6]

(ii) The language of these records has been a puzzle to scholars from the very beginning. The official view of the Archaeological Survey of India has been summed up in a way in the following words.

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5. Sambandar, *Tevāram*, *Tirumuṟai* 3, *Padikam* 322, v. 10.
6. *Ep. Zey.*, Vol. I, p. 18.

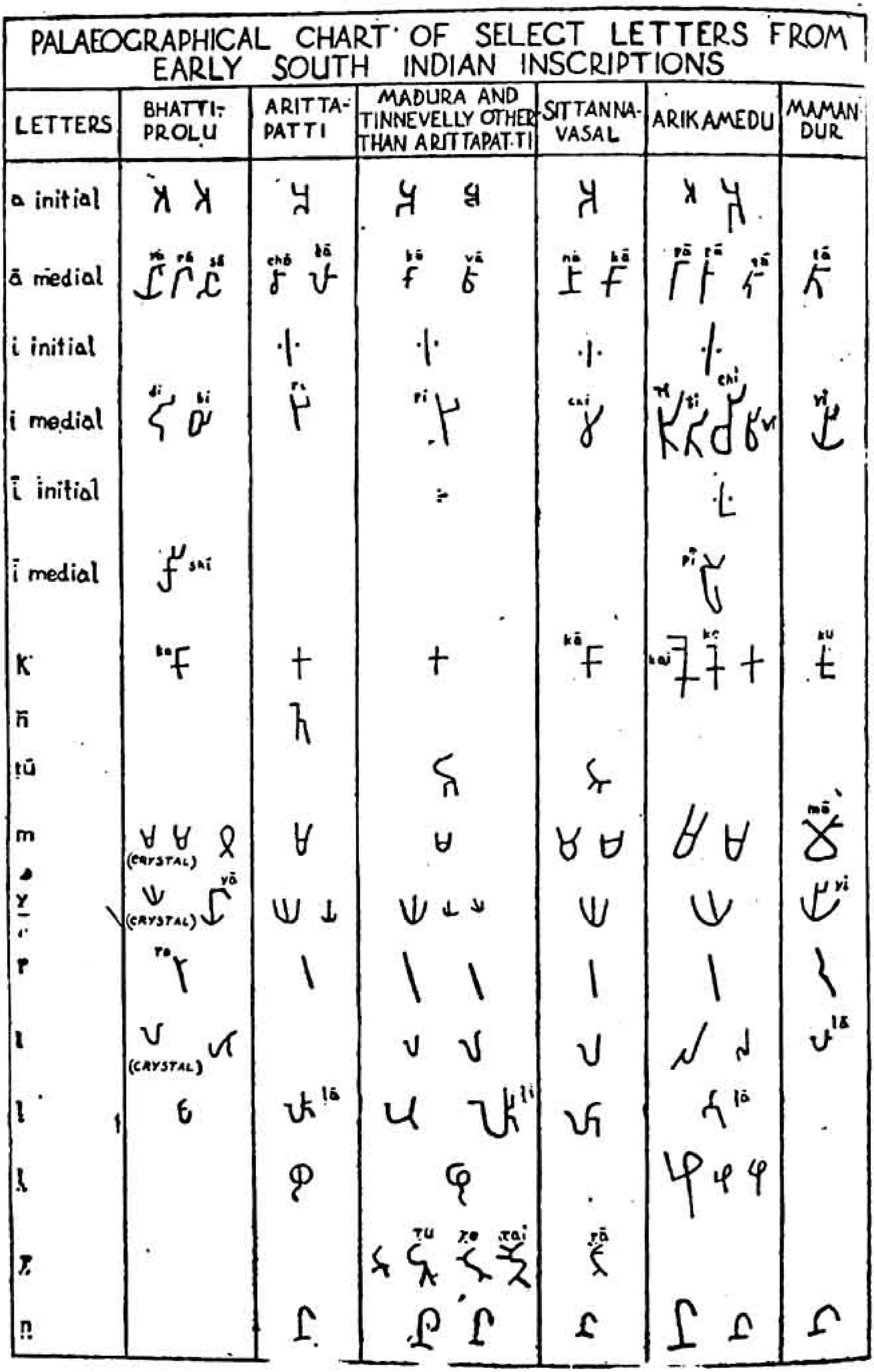

Fig. 12. Palaeographical chart of selected letters from early South Indian inscriptions.

"The exact nature of the language of these inscriptions is still open to question, but they appear to be in early Tamil (as distinguished from the Tamil found in early Tamil literature, as well as modern Tamil) with a sprinkling of Prākṛit."[7]

It is true that all the early inscriptions recovered in the country and written in the Brāhmī script are in the Prākṛt language. So far nearly a thousand such inscriptions, not taking into account the edicts of Aśoka, have been ably and critically edited by competent scholars in various publications. But the South Indian Brāhmī inscriptions have baffled the attempts of scholars in Prākṛt with regard to their interpretation. To determine the language of these enigmatic inscriptions one has to seek a clue from the records themselves. An analysis of the Brāhmī script used in writing these records would reveal the following peculiarities:

(i) Of the hard consonants |*ka*, *ca*, *ṭa*, *ta* and *pa*, only the first or primary letters are found in the Tamil alphabet, *i.e.*, the *varga prathamas* of the Sanskrit alphabet are found in them.

(ii) The soft varieties of the third letters i.e. the *varga tritiyas* of the above consonants in the Sanskrit are absent.

(iii) Of the aspirated varieties, i.e., the second and the fourth letters of these consonants, the letters *tha* is found used sparingly in two are three places while *dha* may also be taken as having been used in one place (Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi A). The others are not met with.

(iv) *Śa* and *ṣa* are also not found. Only *sa* is occasionally met with.

7. *Ancient India*, No. 2. July 1946, p. 109. Even now it is thought that the Brāhmi records have not been satisfactorily interpreted and there is nothing definite about their language. For instance, P. B. Desai writes as follows:
"These records have still remained an unsolved riddle. though they were discovered over four decades ago. The contributory factors for this state of affairs are these: peculiar forms of the Brāhmi alphabet, crude and archaic nature of the languuge which may be an undeveloped variety of Prākṛit (?), difficulty in the grouping of syllables and words, prepossession in regard to their Buddhist origin to the exclusion of their Jaina relationship." (*Jainism in South India and some Jaina Epigraphs*, p. 29, n. 3).

(v) No ligatures or conjunct consonants are met with.

(iv) Among the vowels only *au* is not found;[8] similarly the vowels *ṛ* and *ḷ* of the Sanskrit alphabet as also the *anusvāra aṁ* and the *visarga aḥ* are absent.

So far as the vowels *e* and *o* are concerned only one symbol without any distinction for the short and the long, is found, used both among the vowels and combined consonants. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says: "In the case of the combined consonants the occurrence of short *e* and short *o* deserves special attention, the two being the special characteristics of the Dravidian alphabets."[9] But it has not been possible to make out from the available photographs this difference between the short and long in the vowels *e* and *o*, both as primary vowels and as combined with consonants. It is also to be noted in this connection that this peculiarity is found in the Tamil inscriptions in all periods.

While explaining the Drāviḍi style of writing found in the records at Bhaṭṭiprolu reference has been made to the *sūtra* in the *Tolkāppiyam*, which says that in writing, the pure consonants will have a dot added to it. The next *sūtra* mentions that "*e* and *o* are also of the same nature."[10] An additional dot to denote the short in the vowels *e* and *o*, both primary as well as secondary, is found in Tamil epigraphy on very rare occasions[11] and is more conspicuous by its absence.

The above analysis would show that the language employed in these records had only the *varga prathamas* with no sonants or other aspirated forms. This peculiarity together with the absence of *śa, ṣa, ha* etc., would indicate that the alphabets of the language closely followed the pattern of the classical Dravidian form or Tamil.

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8. The previous scholars who have studied these inscriptions have not recognised the primary vowel *ai* in them, and so included the vowel *ai* as one of the letters absent in them But this is found in the inscription at Āṉaimalai. (See the word *aiḷa*).

9. *Proceedings and Transaction of the Third Oriental Conference*, Madras, 1924, p. 283.

10. *Tolkāppiam, Eḻuttadikaram, Sūtra* 16, see *ante* p. 117.

11. See the Veḷvikkuḍi plates of Parāntaka Neduñjaḍaiyan (*Ep. Ind.* XVII, pp. 291 - 92.)

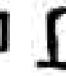
It has been pointed out earlier that some new symbols are also found used in these records. The very fact that these symbols are not found in the Aśokan inscriptions would clearly indicate that they represented alien sounds not found in the standard Brāhmī script and thus would belong to a language quite different from that of the Aśokan records. The vowels assigned to these symbols would certainly be an important factor in deciding the language of these inscriptions as also in their interpretation. Such new symbols found in these records are:

(a) The first symbol ·|· which occurs ten times in the Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country under consideration is not seen in the Brāhmī inscriptions of North India prior to the commencement of the Christian era. However, it is found in the Kṣatrapa, Śātavāhana and Gupta inscriptions and given the value of long *ī*. This symbol is found in the Tamil inscriptions of the eighth century and given the same value. It also occurs in the Brāhmī inscriptions of Ceylon and has been read as short *i*. In the Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country also the symbol is read as short *i* as in the Brāhmī inscriptions from Ceylon.

In the inscriptions of Aśoka the vowel *i* short is indicated by three dots arranged in the form of a triangle (⁖) and long *ī* by four dots arranged in the form of a square (⁘). The latter form found in the Brāhmī records of the Tamil country are taken as short *i* by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar. This difference in the evaluation of the vowels *i* short and long proposed by him is interesting. But this position did not last long, for the original position was restored later. It is however difficult to explain why this difference was short-lived. The formation of the symbol of a vertical line with two dots, one on either side, indicating the vowel *ī* long may be explained as follows. From the *sūtra* in the *Tolkāppiyam* it becomes clear that in the Tamil country, the addition of a dot to any letter or symbol indicated the dimunition of the sound, reducing the *mātra* or the sound length to one half of its original length.[12] According to the above rule, the letter written in the shape of four dots instead of denoting the long *ī*

12. See M. Raghava Ayyangar, article "*Tolkāppiyaṇārum Puḷḷi-y-eḻuttuk-kaḷum*" in his collection of Essays, *Ārāycci-t-tokuti*.

would indicate the form of the short vowel *i*. Very likely it was considered necessary to make some change in the form of long *ī*. This was effected by joining the two diagonally opposite dots, thus making them a line, leaving the other two dots, one on either side.

(b) The second symbol  which looks like the 'inverted J' occurs frequently, more than sixty times, in our inscriptions. It occurs sparingly in the inscriptions at Bhaṭṭiprolu and has been assigned by Bühler the value of *na* long. Though its sound value may not be quite different from that of the same symbol in the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscriptions, it has to be given a different value here. This is evident from the fact that in a particular inscription, viz. the Śittannavāśal record the symol is used along with the ordinary Aśokan *na* form. As such this symbol has to be taken to be different from the ordinary *na*, but denoting the same sound value. The peculiar alphabet *ṉa* of the Tamil language answers to the description. Hence it has to be taken to represent the letter *ṉ* which occurs generally at the end of some words. It some cases the symbol has to be treated as a basic consonant found at the end of some words and indicating third person masculine singular, and in others as *ṉa* as in the case of other letters.

(c) The third symbol , however, occurs rarely in the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country eg. Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam and Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi. Krishna Sastri writes about it as follows: "The formation of this letter is very peculiar. Its similarity with Khalsi Aśokan *Ja* given in Bühler's *Tafel* II—15, 2 is very slight. One can venture to say that it is somewhat like the modern Tamil *ḻa*."[13] K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar also is of the same view.[14] Their suggestion is acceptable. In fact no other value can be assigned to the letter.

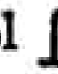
(d) The fourth symbol which also occurs many times in these records resembles very much the Brāhmī letter *la* with a slight difference, namely the addition of a hook line stroke to the right arm. It is suggested that it may be taken to represent the lingual *ḷa*, a distinct feature of the Dravidian languages. Though

13. *Proceedings and Transactions of the First Oriental Conference*, pp. 366, n. 7.

14. *Proceedings and Transactions of the Third Oriental Conference*, p. 285.

the symbol *ḷa* occurs in the Bhaṭṭiprōlu script also, its form is slightly different there.[15]

(e) The fifth symbol is a very curious one. It looks very much like a badly shaped *ṭu*. It occurs once in each of the Āṉaimalai and Sittaṉṉavāśal records, twice in one of the Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi records and four times in another (record I) from the same place. Krishna Sastri says about them: "These are letters the formation of which is not found elsewhere. I have suggested the readings *ḍu* and *ḍai* on the strength of the remarks on the letter *ḍu* made by Dr. Bühler, on the palaeography of the Bhaṭṭiprōlu inscriptions.[16] Still the letters *ḍu* and *ḍai* are not certain. They may be conjunct consonants as well."[17] K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar takes it to be *ṟa* and says: "the only letter that is allied in sound to *ṭa* which has no equivalent in Sanskrit and for which a new symbol had to be devised in the Aśokan code is the Dravidian *ṟa*. The difficulty of pronunciation of this letter and its kinship with *ṭa*, *ḍa* and sometimes with *ta* by which letters it is often substituted not only in speech forms but in allied languages will be evident to any observer. (*Cf.* Tamil *kuṉṟu*, Telugu *koṇḍa*; Tamil *naṉṟu*, Telugu *nāṇḍu*......This likeness in sound has to account for the devised form given to it in our records... ... ... Even in the Vaṭṭeḻuttu script, its formation is such as to be mistaken for *ta* (with but slight difference). What proves conclusively the correctness of the value suggested here is the occurrence of it after *ṉ* in the Āṉaimalai record in the word *kuṉṟa*."[18] Thus the symbol may be taken to denote *ṟa*.

(f) This symbol is found in the Brāhmī inscriptions at Pugaḷiyūr in the Tiruchirapalli District. Comparatively it is later in date than that found in the Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli Districts, and very much resembles the letter found on the potsherds unearthed in the excavations at Arikamēḍu near Pondicherry. The symbol found here looks very much like the letter *ṉa* of the Vaṭṭeḻuttu script. Along side of this symbol we find also in the inscriptions at the place the symbol  indicating the value of cerebral *ṇa* as also a few

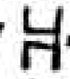
15. See *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. II, p. 324.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 323 ff.
17. *Proceedings of the First All-India Oriental Conference*, p. 324, n. 3.
18. *Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference*, p. 285.

others. But the form is slightly different. The upper part of the symbol instead of being a vertical line with a curve to the right at the top, lies low very much like a semicircle, with the right end of the curve reaching the level of the base. There are also one or two other forms which may be considered as intermediaries between them. Only the value of cerebral *ṇa* suits the places where they occur. Evidently these forms represent the different stages in the evolution of the form of the letter. All of them have been assigned the value of *ṇa*."[19]

It is to be noted in this connection that the shape of the hard *ṟa* employed in the Brāhmī inscriptions at the place, though retaining the same form has undergone some change. The upper part of it in the records of the Pāṇḍya country appears like the Brāhmī *ṭa*, while the lower part consists of two vertical lines like the symbol of the medial *u* added to it, so that it may look different from *ṭu*. But here the upper part has been reduced to a mere hook, the lower part appearing like a mere *ta*. But still a comparison of these forms will show that the latter form was evolved out of the former.

The Brāhmī of these inscriptions, even though following very closely the Brāhmī of the Aśokon records, yet contains a few peculiarities and deviations from the latter. These may be stated briefly as follows :

Vowels :

In the Aśokan inscriptions, the letter *a* appeared like an 'inverted k' with the two arms joined. Even that form is found in these records also in a majority of cases. The letter has both the arms as two seperate angular lines diverging in opposite directions, above and below . The symbol for the vowel *ai* has not been recognised in these inscriptions by the scholars who have studied them till now. The letter *ai* is written in the northern inscriptions as a modified form of *e i, e.*, a horizontal line to the left at the top of a triangle with its apex above and base at the bottom, or in other words, with the addition of the symbol for medial vowel *e*, to the symbol of the primary vowel *e*. This

19. See T. N Subrahmanyan, *Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, pt. 1, pp. 1509—11 ; also his *Paṇḍai Tamiḻ Eḻuttukkaḷ* (in Tamil), pp. 21—22.

is in conformity with the concept of the Sanskrit grammarians deriving the *vṛddhi* vowel *ai* from the *guṇa* vowel *e*. But the form of *ai* found in these records (in the one at Aḷagarmalai, in the combination of *Aiḷa*) is in the shape of a trident, similar to that of the Vaṭṭeḷuttu script of later days; and this same form is found in the Allūru inscription[20] though standing a little bit to the left. The word *Aiḷa* is found also in the Hāthigumphā inscription of the Kalinga king Khāravela.[21] Here it may be taken to signify a Pāṇḍya, as the later members of the family claim descent from *Candra* (Moon) through his son *Budha* (Mercury) and the latter's son *Iḷa*. This trident form in the south appears to be connected with the form of the semi-vowel *ya*.

The necessity for designing and introducing a new form for a letter which already possessed another form in the Brāhmī script would clearly show that the existing form was not suitable for indicating the intended letter while writing in the southern part of the country; evidently the existing form indicated in the south another letter or it was very similar to the form of another letter so as to cause confusion. Such a letter could have been the vowel *e* either long or short, depending on the value assigned to the letter having the triangular shape. Considering that in the case of the vowels *a* and *u*, the standard shape indicated the short sound, the long one being indicated by the addition of a symbol, we may consider that the case of *e* also was similar. Very likely the triangular shape might have originally denoted at least in the south the short *e*, the long vowel *ē* being written by the addition of another symbol. Perhaps this explains the need for designing a new form for the vowel *ai*.

Consonants:

In the Aśokan inscriptions the letter *ma* is written as a circle with two perpendicular arms above. But in these records it is written in the form of a broad cylindrical tube opening up with a cross-bar in the middle. However, the shape of the letter found in the Māmaṇḍūr inscription is somewhat different. It

20. *A.R.S.I.E.*, 331 of 1924; *Rep.*, p. 97 and plate facing it.

21. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XX, pp. 80 and 86.

appears more angular there and the two perpendicular lines at the top appear instead as two slanting lines converging towards a point below and joining together. This form looks very much nearer the shape of the letter in the Grantha script as prevalent in the Tamil country in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D.

The letter *ya*, though written with three arms, is found in the northern Brāhmī with the middle arm too long like an anchor. Though similar forms are found in these records also, they are very rare. The most common shape is to have all the three arms of equal length.

Medial vowels :

It has been noticed earlier that in northern Brāhmī the long *ā* is indicated by the addition of a horizontal stroke at the right to the top of the character, and that in Drāviḍi the letter denoted the consonant with the inherent *a* short, instead of *ā* long. Sometimes we find here also two such strokes to indicate *ā* long.

Medial *ī* is generally denoted by the addition of two straight lines, one horizontal and the other vertical, opening upwards at the top of the right; sometimes the angle is found smoothened, thus forming a sort of curve.

Medial *o* is formed by a line at the top of the character projecting both to the left and to the right; sometimes it is found as two separate strokes, one on the right and the other on the left.

One other peculiarity in writing vowelled consonants is observed in these inscriptions. Instead of adding the symbol for the medial vowel to the consonant, sometimes the consonant and the vowel are written side by side. For instance, in the inscription at Kongarpuḷiyankuḷam, for denoting the letter *ṉu* in the word Pākaṉūr, the name of a village, the symbols for the consonant *ṉa* and the vowel *u* (both of which make the word *ṉu*) are written side by side. Similarly in the record at Śittannavāśal the letter *ṭa* in the word *aliṭanam* is represented by two symbols, the consonant *ṭa* and the vowel *a* written side by side. Likewise in the inscription at Karungāḷakkuḍi the letter *yū* in the word

Eṭhuyūr is denoted by two symbols, the consonant *ya* and the vowel *ū*, written side by side. These examples will show clearly that in these Brāhmī records, the consonant letter without the addition of any vowel sign is to be treated as a vowelless or pure basic consonant (without the inherent *a*).

It is very likely that this method of writing was adopted not out of ignorance of the rules of the formation of the vowelled consonants, but in consonance with some definite principles followed in writing in those days. The expression *ūr* which comes at the end of words like Pākanūr and Eṭhuyūr clearly indicates them as the names of villages. They were probably named after persons like Pākaṉ and Eṭhuy. Hence the above form was adopted to indicate that such villages were named after certain persons.

In other respects, the Brāhmī of these records follows the standard pattern of the Aśokan inscriptions.

The new symbols invented both for new sounds as also for a few letters for which symbols already existed in north Indian Brāhmī, but which were found unsuitable for use in the records, would clearly indicate that the language employed in them was not Prākṛt, but Tamil, the language of the people of the region where these inscriptions are found.

Language:

This view is further strengthened by a study of the words employed in these records.

The real import of a few of the words that frequently occur in these records but have not been properly realised and interpreted so far by the scholars who have studied them may be considered first :

Among them are *alaṉa*, *aṉatai* and *aritaṉ* :

Alaṉa or *alāṉa*, *aṉatai* and *anitaṉa*, *aritāṉa* or *ariliṉa* are some of the words which are found largely used in these inscriptions. Judging from the context in which they are found, it would appear that they are the proper names of persons. Then the letter *ṉa* at the end of the words *alaṉa* and *aritaṉa* have

to be treated as the basic consonant ṉ indicating the masculine singular suffix.

Of the first word the most common form is *atāṉa* and occasionally *ataṉa,* without the medial ā long for the letter *ta.* Adopting the system followed in the case of records at Bhaṭṭiprōlu described earlier, the consonant letters without the addition of any symbol represent the basic or pure (vowelless) consonants, those with the symbol of ā long represent the consonant with the inherent *a* short; and to denote ā long two such symbols are added. According to this principle the word has to be read as *ataṉ*. This looks very similar to the word *Ātaṉ* found in early classical Tamil literature as part of personal names, *Cf.* the Cēra ruler *Cēral Ātaṉ*. The initial *a* is shortened instead of being lengthened.

The second word written as *aṉatai* has to be read as *antai*; and this in turn looks very similar to the word *āntai* (with the initial long vowel shortened) occurring likewise in classical Tamil literature. *Cf.* the poet *Picir Āntaiyar*, whose compositions are included in the collection *Ahanāṉūṟu.*

The third word has to be read as *aritaṉ* or *aritiṉ*. This may be compared with the word *Āritaṉ* of the name of the Tamil grammarian *Aiyan-Āritaṉ-ār*, author of the treatise *Puṟappoṟuḷ-veṇpāmalai.*

It may be taken that these three names are really *Ātaṉ*, *Āntai* and *Āritaṉ*, with the initial vowel shortened in all of them.

Āritaṉ and *Āṟitiṉ* are the Tamil forms of the names Hārītā and Hārīti respectively. The name Hārītīputra is mentioned in many of the Prākṛt inscriptions of the early centuries of the Christian era found in Karnāṭaka and western India. The kings of the Kadamba dynasty who ruled from Vanavāsi (Banavase) claim to be *Hārītīputras* of the *Mānavyagotra.* The word *Aritaṉ* or *Āritaṉ* of these inscriptions should be taken as indicating that the bearer of that name was a member of the Hārīta family.

There is a specific *Sūtra* in the *Tolkāppiyam*, which states that the Tamil word *āntai* is formed by the combination of two words *ātaṉ* and *tantai* and that another word *pūntai* is formed

similarly by the combination of the words *Pūtaṉ* (*Bhūtaṉ*) and *tantai*. This is the middle of three *sūtras* explaining the rules of *sandhi* when the word *tantai* having the meaning of father is added to the proper names of persons. This is a general rule. The commentators point out the following as examples: *Cāttaṉ+tantai=Cāttantai*; *Kiraṉ+tantai=Kirantai*; *Koṟṟaṉ+tantai=Koṟṟantai*. The suffix *aṉ* of the standing personal name and the initial consonant *t* (retaining the medial vowel *a*) of the joining word *tantai* are dropped. The *sūtra* after that under discussion gives the special rule to be observed when the standing personal name happens to be *Ātaṉ* and *Pūtaṉ*. In addition to the changes mentioned in the preceding *sūtra*, the final consonant and the initial vowel of the standing word and the coming word respectively (remaining after effecting the above change) are also dropped. Thus in the word *ātaṉ* the suffix *aṉ* is dropped as per the preceding *sūtra*, and of the remaining *āt*, the final consonant *t* also is now dropped, thus leaving only the initial vowel *ā*. Similarly in the word *tantai*, the initial consonant *t* is dropped according to the preceding *sūtra* and of the remaining *antai* the initial vowel is now dropped, thus leaving only the final *ntai*. Thus combining with *ā*, the residue of the standing word, it becomes *āntai*. The third *sūtra* gives the exemptions, *i e*, the cases wherein the above rules will not apply. Accordingly if such proper names are preceded by adjectives, there is no change (*i.e.*, no dropping of letters). If the standing word is *Peruñcāttaṉ*, *i.e.*, Cāttaṉ with the adjective *Perum*, signifying great, there will be no dropping of letters when *tantai* is added to it. Thus *Peruñcāttaṉ+tantai* will be *Peruñcāttaṉ-ṟantai*.[22]

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22. *Iyaṟpeyar muṉṉart tantai muṟaivariṉ* (348)
mutaṟkaṉ meykeṭa vakara nilaiyu
meyyoḻit taṉkeṭu mavviyaṟ peyarē.

Ātaṉum Pūtaṉuṅ kūṟiya viyalpoṭu
peyaroṟ ṟakaraṉ tuvarak keṭumē. (349)

Ciṟappoṭu varuvaḻi yiyaṟkai yākum. (350)

(*Tolkāppiyam, Eḻuttadikāram*, Ed. by P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri.)

There are also some more words in Tamil which have been formed likewise in combination with *tantai* eg. *entai* made up of *eṉ* and *tantai* meaning 'my father', *nuntai*, made up of *nun* and *tantai* meaning 'your father', etc. These two words relate to the first and second persons of the grammatical formula. Similar combinations with the words *tāy* (mother) and *tampi* (younger

The above *sūtras* would thus show that in those early days, many names in which the word *tantai* forms an integral part were in common use among the people of the Tamil country. That such was the position will become evident from the following names borne by some of the poets and others as gleaned from the Śangam classics; Cāttantai, Kīrantai, Āntai, Pūntai, Koṟṟantai, Piṭantai, Eiṉantai, Vaṭukantai etc. On the analogy of *entai* (made up of two words *eṉ* and *tantai*) meaning 'my father' and *nuntai* (made up of two words *nuṉ* and *tantai*) meaning 'your father' the above words are taken as indicating the fathers respectively of Cāttaṉ, Kīraṉ, Ātaṉ, Pūtaṉ, Koṟṟaṉ, Piṭaṉ, Eyiṉaṉ and Vaḍukaṉ. Thus the word Āntai has been taken as indicating the father of Ātaṉ.

But it would appear rather strange that persons bearing these names, themselves great poets, instead of being known by their own personal names, should be known as the father of their sons about whom nothing is known. It is usual to indicate the name of a person as "so and so the son of so and so." This practice also appears to have been in vogue in those days as will be evident from the names *Maduraikkarikkāyaṉārmagaṉār Nakkīraṉār*, *Ollaiyūr Kiḻarmagaṉ Peruñcāttaṉ*, *Kāṭṭūr Kiḻarmagaṉār Kaṇṇaṉār* etc., occuring in the Śangam classics. It might be possible to conceive of stray cases where the father of a famous son is referred to as "the father of a well-known son". But the above cases do not appear to be stray ones. On the other hand these appear to be common as a class. Among the persons having the name *Āntai* or *Āntaiyār* we have Picir Āntaiyār, (authors of *Naṟṟiṇai* 91) Ōtal Āntaiyār (author of the hundred stanzas, 301-400 of *Pālai* in

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brother) also occur for the first and second persons; *empi* made. up of *eṉ* and *tampi* or *ampi* (my brother); *numpi* made up of *nuṉ* and *tampi* or *ampi* (your younger brother); also *yāy* (my mother) made up of *ed* and *āy*; *ñāy* (your mother) made of *nuṉ* and *āy*.

> *yayum jñāyum yār akiyaro?*
> *entaiyum nuntaiyum emmuṣaik keḻir?*
> *yānum niyum ev—vaḻi aṟitum;*
>
> *Kuruntogai*, 40.

Such combinations do not, however, occur for the third person The words *tāy* and *tampi* are generally taken as signifying such relations with reference to the third person, thus obviating the necessity of using any special word for that. (*taṉ ay* and *tāṉ tampi*).

Ainkuṟunūṟu) *Añcil* Āntaiyār (author of *Kuṟuntokai* 294 and *Naṟṟiṇai* 233) Ciṟakkuṭi Āntaiyār, (author of *Kuṟuntokai* 56, 57, 62, 133, 168, 222, 273, 300, and *Naṟṟiṇai* 16 etc. It is inconceivable that these poets were known as fathers of sons bearing the name of *Ātaṉ*, who are otherwise unknown.

This difficulty appears to have been felt by some scholars even earlier.[27] They have therefore tried to explain the construction e.g. of the word *Āntai* made up of the two words *Ātaṉ* and *tantai* as referring to "a person who has *Ātaṉ* as his father," that is referring to the son of *Ātaṉ*. But rules of grammar do not admit of such a construction. It has therefore to be given up.[28] Further it would have been much easier and more normal to refer to a person as 'the son of so and so' instead of in a round about way as 'the person having so and so as his father.

The problem is further complicated by the mention of the names of the wives and sons of such persons. The incident relating to the lady referred to as *Kīrantai maṉaivi* (the wife of Kīrantai) is significant.[29] The term *Kīrantai maṉaivi* would mean 'the wife of *Kīrantai*' *i.e.*, the wife of the father of *Kīraṉ*. This is a circuitous way of referring to a person. She could be easily referred to as the mother of *Kīraṉ*.

The *Tolkāppiyam* gives in continuation of the three *sūtras* mentioned above (codifying the changes that take place in the *sandhi* when the word *tantai*, meaning father, is added to certain proper or personal names) another *sūtra* detailing the changes when the word denoting son is introduced.

Appeyar meyyoḻit taṉkeṭu vaḻiyu
Niṟṟaḻu murittē yammeṉ cāriyai
Makkaṉ muṟaitokūu maruṅki ṉāṉa.

(*Tolkāppiyam*, *Sūtra*, 351.)

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27. *Śentamiḻ*, Vol. xix, pp. 281 ff.

28. *Tamil Poḻil* Vol. x, pp. 33, 410.

29. See Ch. 29. It is said that a person known as Kirantai went on a pilgrimage leaving his wife at Madurai, with no one else to look after her, thinking that the protection given by the Pāṇḍya king was enough.

According to it in the expression *Cāttaṉ makaṉ koṟṟaṉ, i.e., Koṟṟaṉ* son of *Cāttaṉ*, the word *makaṉ* itself is not used (being only understood). while the suffix *aṉ* of the standing word is dropped and its place taken by the increment *am*. Thus it becomes *Cāttaṅ Koṟṟaṉ*. This is followed by another rule which gives the exceptions in certain cases whether the word in question denotes the father or the son.

taṉum pēṉuṅ kōṉu meṉṉu
mā muṟai yiyaṟpeyar tiripiṭanilavē (352)

According to this *sūtra* there is no dropping off if the words *taṉ, ēṉ* and *kōṉ* are either followed by the word *tantai* or have the word denoting son understood after them *e.g., taṉ + tantai = taṉ-ṟantai; pēn + makaṉ + Koṟṟan = pēṉ–Koṟṟaṉ*.

These would show that just as in the case of *tantai* or father, the word denoting a son was also largely used in the names of persons in those days.

The author of *Tiṇai-moḻi-y-aimpatu*, one of the eighteen minor classical poems, known by the collective name of *Padineṇ-kīḻ-kaṇakku* is known as *Cāttantaiyār-makaṉār kīraṉ-koṟṟaṉār i.e., Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉār* son of *Cāttantaiyār*. The name of the poet *Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉār*, is to be interpreted as *Koṟṟaṉ* son of *Kīraṉ* and who at the same time was the son of *Cāttantai*, the son of *Cāttaṉ i.e.,* the person who was the father of *Cāttaṉ*.

Cāttaṉtaiyār makaṉār Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉār
Kīraṅkoṟṟaṉār = Kīraṉ makaṉ Kiṟṟaṉār.

The full name will be:

Cāttaṉuḍaiya tantaiyiṉ makaṉāraṉa Kīraṉ makaṉ Koṟṟaṉ.

Such an interpretation does not, however appear to be correct.

This very same combination with the substitution of the name *Piṭantai* instead of *Cāttantai* occurs in one of the Brāhmī labels now under discussion and found at Pugaḻiyūr. The actual reading in the inscription is.

Piṭantai makaṉ Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉ

Under the circumstances we have to find some other explanation for similar constructions as also the word *makaṉ*.

There are some words in Tamil with the suffix *makaṉ* added to them like *āṇmakaṉ*, *paṇimakaṉ*, *perumakaṉ* etc. In all of them the suffix *makaṉ* does not mean a son. In fact *āṇmakaṉ* means *āṇmai uḍaiyavaṉ* (one who is courageous or brave), and *paṇimakaṉ* means *paṇiśeivaṉ* (one who does service or work). Similar expressions are found in Sanskrit, such as *Vaṇik putra* meaning only a merchant (not a merchant's son.)[30] In all these cases the word *makaṉ* and *putra* obviously indicated only a spiritual son and not a natural son. It is only by such an interpretation that we can explain the formation of the name *Piṭantaimakaṉ Kīraṉ-Koṟṟaṉ* which indicates *Kīraṉ makaṉ Koṟṟaṉ i.e., Koṟṟaṉ* son or follower of *Kīraṉ* son of *Piṭantai*. It is also to be noted in this connection that the names *S'āttaṉ piṭaṉ* (Bhaṭāra) *Kīraṉ* (Kubera, etc.) are all holy ones.

Considering the above it would appear that the word *tantai* should have had some special significance or meaning in addition to its literal meaning, father. The term 'father' denotes five persons, the bodily or physical father, the religious preceptor, the teacher who gives education, king and one who gives food.[31] There are different tests by which these five persons are distinguished.[32] But the religious preceptor in addition to the bodily or physical father is always included in the list and occupies an honoured place. The Sanskrit word *guru* meaning a preceptor or teacher also refers to the bodily father. In the inscriptions of the Western Cāḷukya king Vikramāditya I this word is used in that sense (*svagurośśriyam*: the royalty of his father).[33]

Evidently the word *tantai* used in these compounds gives out some such meaning as a 'spiritual father'; possibly it denoted a religious teacher in the same way as the word 'Father' is now applied to Roman Catholic Priests or an *ācārya* among the Hindus. Therefore the word *antai* (*ataṉ* + *tanai*) may be possibly taken as meaning 'the Holy Father *Ātaṉ*,' instead of merely as 'the father of *Ātaṉ*.'

30. It may be mentioned in this connection that the purohit Brahmins of Gayā (*Gayāvalis*) are called *Gangāputras* and the Vira Balingas of the Telugu country (Viravalañjiyar of the Tamil country) are called *Pārvatīputras*.

31. *Eg*. The Gadval plates, *E.I.*, Vol. x, p. 103, ll. 13-14.

32. Vide the Tokal (தொகை) section of the Tamil *nighaṇṭus*.

33. See *Tmil Lexicon*, S. V. Vol. I Ainkuravar.

Then the word *Ātaṉ* which is frequently met with in these inscriptions should be taken as denoting a person of high religious merit respected and venerated by people. The word seems to be derived from the Sanskrit word *āpta* and the Tamil *nighaṇṭus* give it as one of the synonyms of the *arhat.*

This word is also found largely used in the *Tēvāram*, when referring to the persons of the heterodox religious orders *i.e.*, persons belonging to religious other than Saivism like the Buddhist, Jaina, Ājīvika orders. This word is explained by modern commentators as a low people (*kiḻmakkaḷ*)[33a] and as ignorant persons, fools (*aṟivilḷātavar*)[33b]

If really the word *ātaṉ* meant only low people or ignorant fools, then would it have been borne as personal names, even by royal personages : *cf.* Cēral *Ātaṉ* i.e., *Ātaṉ*, the Cera king ? Further from the context where this word occurs in the *Tēvāram* hymns, it would appear that it should denote one of the many heterodox religious groups then prevalent in the country.

It has been pointed out above that the word is derived from *āpta* which is a synonym for *arhat.* The word *arhat* is found in use not only among the Jainas, but also among the Buddhists and the Ājīvikas. Further, from the Tamil poem *Nīlakēśi*,[34] it is learnt that the word *āpta* was used by the Ājivikas, to denote exclusively the founder of that religion (Makkhali Gosāla), *Maṟkali*.[35] Even in a late Kannaḍa inscription of the thirteenth century A.D. from Śravaṇa Beḷgola the word *āpta* is used, so as to suggest the Ājīvikas.[36]

It is therefore possible that the words *Ātaṉ* and *Āntai* (Holy Father Ātaṉ) are terms denoting the people of the Ājīvika faith.[37]

33a. *Tirujñānasambandar Tēvāram*, First Tirumurai; Ed. by Dharmapuram Adhinam, p. 97.

33b. Second Tirumurai, II, 107-10, p. 504.

34. See vv. 670, 671, 683 etc. (A. Chakravarti's edn.). See A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ajivikas*, pp. 79, 125, 244 and 276.

35. Basham thinks *āptan* to be 'a rather unusual title which may have had a specifically Ājivika connotation.' (*op. cit.*, p. 79).

36. *Ep. Car.*, Vol. II, (Rev. Edn.) SB No. 234.

37. It is very likely that similar combinations 'Pūntai, Kirantai, and Śāttantai also meaṉ respectively Holy Father Pūtan (Bhūta).

Paḷi is another word found thrice in these inscriptions, at Kiḻavaḷavu, Karungāḷakkuḍi and Ariṭṭappaṭṭi. This word has an additional symbol *i* at its end in the record at Kiḻavaḷavu and thus the reading of the word is *Paḷi i*, while the record at Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi has the letter *ya* at the end of the word, which therefore reads *pāḷiya.* Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the word in the record at the latter place as *Paḷiy*, with the expletive use of *y* at the end as in accord with the spoken dialect. The suffix *y* is commonly found in several Tamil inscriptions of the early period (up to the 10th century A.D.). But he thinks that the *i* at the end of the word in the Kiḻavaḷavu inscription is the pronoun denoting 'this.' But this letter *I* as indicating the pronoun is not found used either in Tamil literature or inscriptions. It is also very doubtful if it was ever used in that way in the other Dravidian languages in early times. Again its occurrence at the very end of the record also shows that the letter could not have been used in that sense, as it is quite against the Tamil or Dravidian syntax. Subrahmanya Ayyar himself is aware of it and so he adds, " if its use at the end of a sentence is objectionable and unlikely it may form part of *paḷi.*" He thinks that the word *pāḷi y* is the Tamil word meaning an excavation in stone set apart for the residence of monks and that it is not unlikely that it is connected with the Prākṛt word *pāḷiya* as suggested by Krishna Sastri. He also quotes two extracts from the Tamil *Nighaṇṭu* in support of the meaning he has suggested.[38]

But the word for which the meaning 'stone excavation' has been suggested by him is *pāḷi* with the palatal *ḷ* while the word in

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Holy Father Kiraṉ, and Holy Father S'āttaṉ, and that these names related to the various religious faiths then prevalent in the Tamil country. The *Śilappadikāram* mentions *Paṣaṇḍa* S'āttaṉ (Canto. IX, 11. 12, 15).

(*cf.* also *Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu Commemoration Volume*, pp. 156-8).

38. These are *pāḻi tapataṅ karaṇḍai paḷḷiyē muṉivar vaṭam* (*Iḍappeyar* 56)

Pugaluṅ Kaṟpāḻi Karaṇḍai (*Ibid* 14).

There are different *nighaṇṭus* in Tamil and Subhramanya Ayyar has not mentioned the particular *nighaṇṭu* from which he has quoted. The quotations are from the fifth section of the *Cūḍamaṇi nighaṇṭu.* The first means: '*Paḻi, tapalam. karaṇḍai* and *paḷḷi* denotes the abode of sages.'

The second means: '*Karaṇḍai denotes a pāḻi made of stone.*'

these label inscriptions is *paḷi* with the lingual *ḷ*. The letter *ḷa* was not unknown then, as may be seen from the fact that the letter has been used in some other inscriptions. Thus it will be seen that the two words are different.

The actual form of the word as found in these labels is *paḷi* with the suffixes *i* and *y* which have only phonetic values and not any particular etymological value. In consonance with the general principle followed in the reading of the inscriptions, which are in the Drāviḍi script, the word is read or restored as *paḷi*. It must be mentioned, however, that there is no Tamil word either as *paḷi* or *paḷi*. Evidently it is the word *paḷḷi* with the double or second *ḷ* in the middle dropped. This feature is common in Prākṛt and also met with in Tamil literature frequently.

The word *paḷḷi* is generally used in Tamil epigraphy to denote a Jaina or Buddhist temple and *paḷḷic–candam* to denote the land or village gifted evidently as tax-free, to such a temple or religious institution. The devotional literature of the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas uses the word *paḷḷi* as referring to such a temple. Ñānasambanda in his hymn on Araḷivanallūr refers to one section of heretics as 'those who appropriate small fish (or fish fit for cooking) taking their stand in the *paḷḷi*, near the (Back-water, salt-river).[39] It is also used to denote in addition the hermitage or cell of a recluse of the Jaina or Buddhist religion.[40] But etymologically

39. *Kaḻi-y-arugu paḷḷi-y-iḍam*: *āga vaḷu miṉ kavārvārgaḷ*
(III, 82-10 Tevāram).
Tirumangai Aḻvar likewise uses the word in his hymn.
(*Periya Tirumoḻi*, 2-105).
In all these places *paḷḷi* is taken to mean *śamaṇap-paḷḷi*.

40. cf. *Mātavi Mātavar Paḷḷiyuḷ atainlatum*
(*Maṇimekalai*, 18-8).
The *Maduraik-kāñji* contains the following: Nilamanar vaiyat= torutāmāgi yuyar milai yulaga mivaṉin raidu maṟa neṟi
pilaiyā vaṉpuḍai neñjiṟ periyōr mee yiṉidi nuṟaiyuṅ
kuṉṟu kuyiṉ ṟaṉṉa Vandaṉar paḷḷiyum (11, 470-74).
Yirumpūdu āṉṟa naṟumpūn śekkaiyuṅ
Kuṉṟupala kuḷi ip polivaṉa tōṉṟa (11, 487-88).
Kurumpal kulvir kuṉṟu kaṇḍaṉṉa
paruntirun tukakkum paṉma nallir (11, 501-2).
It is not known if the term *anḍaṇar paḷḷi* in l. 474 may be taken to mean the dwelling place of Brahman ascetics. It is very doubtful if Brahman ascetics repaired to caves for any religious exercise.

the word means a bed, a sleeping place and also sleep; and it is generally in this sense that the word is used mostly in literature.[41] Very likely the word originally indicated the bed or sleeping place used and later on came to denote the residence of such monks, which in course of time also included their places of worship erected in their compounds or very close to them.

It is also to be noted in this connection that the three words *paḷḷi*, *paḻi* and *pāli* or *pāḷi* are closely connected. A verse in the *Periyapurāṇam*, while describing the destruction of the Jainas at Madurai after their defeat in the religious disputation with the Śaiva saint Triuñānasambandar in the presence of the Pāṇḍya king, says that "all the *pāḻi* where the *Amaṇar* were gathered and the *paḷḷi* where the *Arugar* (*Arhat*) resided in both the urban and suburban areas in the city were uprooted."[42] The word *Amaṇar* denotes the Jainas in general and the word *Arugar* their God Arhat.[43] So according to the *Periyapuraṇam* the word *paḻi* would refer to the place where the Jainas gather, and *paḷḷi* their temple. But *pāḻi* is used also in the same sense of a temple. The *Nalāyiradivya-prabandam* refers to the *Vāṉavar kōn pāḻi*.[44] and the commentary known as the *Iḍu* on the *Tiruvāymoḻi* mentions "that the elephant of the *Aiyaṉ pāḻi* is not designed for the battle." [45] The *Aiyaṉ pāḻi* mentioned here was the temple of Aiyaṉār or Śāṣṭa in front of which was placed a huge elephant in brick and mortar.[46] The word *pāḻi* is also used in Tamil literature to mean a hermitage or abode of seers,[47] and also as a

41. cf. *Kaḷa akkāl paḷḷiyuḷ voittaṟṟāl*
Kuraḷ 840 in the former sense and *Kalittokai* 121 in the latter sense.

42. *Pūmiyin Maturaiyuḷḷār pūṟaltuḷār amaṇar śērum*
Pāḷḷiyum Arugar mēvum paḷḷiyum aṉa ellām śiḻaṟappariltu
(*Periyāpurāṇam, Tiruñānasambāndar Purāṇam*, 871.i

43. The same work uses the word Arugar denote the Jainas (*Daṇḍ*) *Aḍigaḷ Purāṇam*, 10, 18 etc.).

44. *Vaṉavar kōṉ pāḻi—*(*Iyaṟ* 2-13)

45. *Aiyaṉ paḷiyiṉ Āṉai Pōrkkurittam aṉṟu* (*Iḍu*, I-I.5).

46. The God S'āsta is generally considered as a god in the Hindu pantheon. He is found in the Jaina pantheon also. (See T. N. Ramachandran, *Tirupparuttikuṉṟam and its Temples*. (pp. 33 and 202).

47. *Muṉivar vacam—pūtam tampāṟ paḷḷih kōṇḍuṇpavar pāḻi toṟum*
(*Tēvaram*, 186-5).

sleeping place.[48] We thus find that both the words *paḷḷi* and *paḷi* have been used in Tamil literature, and, convey the same idea or meaning. Very likely these two words denoted the institutions of different sects, the Jainas, the Ājīvikas and the Buddhists.

The other word *Pali* is usually understood to mean a language, a particular form of Prākṛt used in the Buddhist literature. But with regard to its origin opinion is divided among scholars. Childers in his *Pāli Dictionary* gives the following meaning for the word: "a series, row, line etc.," and for Pāli-bhāṣa "the language of the Buddhist sacred texts." Macdonell gives it the meaning 'dyke.' Buddhaghoṣa uses the word to denote a boundary line. Thus according to their interpretation the word does not denote a language. But Walleser thinks it was a language and says that the term is derived from the word *Pāṭali* or *Paṭali-grama* "where the Buddhist Bikkus assembled soon after the death of the Buddha and which for a long time was the centre of Buddhist life." He thinks that it was originally known as *pāṭali-bhāṣa* or the *bhāṣa* or *Pāṭali* or *Pataliputra* (or pura) and as a result of phonetic changes (1. shortening of the final vowel, 2. dropping of the intervocalic *ṭ* with contraction and 3. cerebralising of *l*), the word became *Pāli-bhāṣa*. According to him Pāli-bhāṣa was the language of Pāṭaliputra. He also connects the words *Pāli* and *Paḷi* and thinks that very likely the latter is an expression which comes straight from Ceylon.[49]

It must be noted, however, that linguistically the suggestion of Wallser does not seem to be sound. It may be well asked how *Pāli* which was predominantly used in Western India became associated with a town in Magadha 'unless one maintains that *Pāli* was the name of the language in which was written the Buddhist primitive canon some of whose linguistic features did penetrate in the Pali canon." If *Pāli* is to be derived from Pāṭali (putram), it must be really very old. But as pointed out by Childers, "the term Pāli as a name (for the language of) the Buddhist scriptures was of late introduction, probably dating from the second or first century after Christ."

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48. *Perumpāḷi śūḷnia vilattavai* (*Div. Iyaṛ* - 1.80)

49. *Sprache and Heimat des pali Kanorns* No. 4, referred to *Indian Historical Quarterly Vol. IV* (1928), pp *173-5*; also Vol. VI., pp. 377-9.

Pisani attempts to derive the word Pāli secondarily from the word *pali-bhāṣā*. He considers the word *palibhāṣā* to be a *vṛddhi* derivation from *paribhāṣā*, meaning teaching, rule, and definition. Thus *paribhāṣā* or its Prākritised form *Pali-bhāṣā* meant the language in which the rules of the faith were written (*i.e.*,) the language of the canon.[50]. It seems that the word *paḷi* was known as *paḷi* in Tamil. The commentary on the *Yapparuṅkalakkārikai*, a work on Tamil prosody mentions *Paḷittayam* as a grammatical work on the Prākṛt.[51] From this it becomes evident that the word *Pali* denoted a Prākṛt language even in the tenth century A. D. when the commentary appears to have been written. Is it possible that the early Buddhist literature got the name *paḷi* or *paḷi*, because it was exclusively the language of the monks who resided in the *paḷis* ?

From a consideration of the above it may be concluded that the word *paḷḷi* originally meant a bed or sleeping place set apart for the monks, which in course of time came to designate their residence, and later still by extension it came to denote the hermitage of the monks and also the temple attached to it. The other word *pali* is also closely related to it, possibly on account of its derivation therefrom.[52]

Paḷi (or *paḷḷi*) is not the only term used in these epigraphs to denote the cave or bed that was donated. Many other terms are found. Among them are *kavi* meaning a vault or enclave (Muttupaṭṭi) *pōṉ* (Kongarpuḷiankuḷam), *Kal-kañ-caṇam* of stone (Marugāḷtalai). These are pure Tamil words or those formed according to the rules of Tamil grammar. The *atiṭṭaṉam* (Sanskrit *adhiṣṭhana*) meaning a dwelling place or abode, is the word largely used in the labels recovered from Pugaḷiyur. The same is seen in the form *atiṭṭāṉam*. The exact significance of this word meaning a seat has been discussed at length by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar.[53] The addition of the suffix *m* applied to

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50. *Dr, S. K, Balvalkar Felicitation Volume*, pp. 189-191.

51. *Paḷittiyameṉṟum pākata vilakkaṇamum—Kārikai payiram* I, *urai*.

52. It is not known what connection the word *pālidhvaja* has with these terms.

See *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. xxxvii pp. 109-112 for a paper on '*Paḷi, Pāḷi* and *Pāli*' by the author.

53. *Proceedings and Transactions of the Third Oriental Conference*, pp. 296-8.

words of Sanskrit origin would clearly demonstrate that it has been adopted to conform to the principles of Tamil grammar (to suit the genius of the Tamil language).

Some pure Tamil words are also found in the inscriptions, such as *tantai* (father) occurring in the Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi record A, and *makan̲* (son) in the Uṇḍānkal record.

The words with the suffix *an̲* indicating third person singular masculine in the Tamil language occur very frequently in these records. *Kośipan̲, Kuṭumpikan̲, Salakan̲, Vaṇikan̲* etc., are some of such words found in them. It may be seen from these forms that they have been adapted from words of Sanskrit origin to conform to the genius of the Tamil language.

Words like *kuṭupita* (*kuṭuppitta*) (Marugāḷtalai) *pir̲anta* (Ṣittan̲n̲avāśal), and *śeyta* (S'ittan̲n̲avāśal) which are all adjectival participles of the Tamil language are found used quite correctly in these records.

Terms indicating professions, *pon̲ kuḷavan̲, pūvāṇikan̲,* and *paṇita-vaṇikan̲* occurring in the Alagarmalai labels, *pon-vaṇikan̲* and *vannakan̲* occurring in the Pugaḷiyūr inscriptions, *tacan̲* (*taccan̲*) found in the Māmaṇḍūr records are all Tamil forms in use even from such early times.

Terms like *nāṭu* and *ūr* found in these inscriptions obviously denoted territorial divisions. They are Tamil terms still in use in the Tamil country.[54]

The word *ur̲aiyul* in the sense of 'residing at' used in the Ān̲aimalai record is very significant. This term had been in use in ancient times and is found used in classical Tamil literature, though in later times it does not appear to have been so popular.

The use of the word *tanta* in the Māmaṇḍūr inscriptions as an adjectival participle in the sense of 'conqueror of' reminds one of its use in classical Tamil literature.[55]

54. C. Narayana Rao tries to make the word *nāṭu* or *nāḍu* a word of Sanskrit origin, deriving it from *naṭa*, to wander. This need not be discussed in detail here. But it will suffice to note that this term as indicating a territorial division has been used in the Tamil country and that in the Tamil language.

55. See for instance *Āriyap-paṭai tantaNeduñjeḷiyan̲*;
Ollaiyūr tanta Pūta-Pāṇḍiyan̲ etc.

The use of the adjective indicating the place or origin or the profession as a prefix to the name of the person, *vēṇ Kōsipaṉ* (Marugaḷtalai) *Erukoṭūr Iḷa-Kuṭumpikaṉ* Pōlālaiyaṉ (Tirupparaṉkuṉṟam) is a Dravidian form. In Sanskrit inscriptions these are found placed after the names.[56]

The use of the aspirated *ṭha* of the Sanskrit alphabet in these records appears to have a special significance. The places where it is found are:

Āṉaimalai : Ariṭṭha Koyipaṉ
Karuṉgāḷakkudi : Eṭhuya ūr

These would indicate that the letter has been used in places where ordinarily the hard consonant would be doubled as *ṭṭa*.[57] The aspirated *ṭha* of Sanskrit is written as *ṭṭa* here. The change of the final *a* long of the Sanskrit word into *ai* is a peculiarity in the Tamil language. cf: SK. *Māla* = Tamil *mālai*; SK. Sitā = Tamil Citai; SK. Maṇimēkhalā = Tamil Maṇimekalai; SK. Dvāraka = Tamil Tuvārakai. The change of *u* into *i* in the middle letter cannot, however, be easily explained. Very likely it is to be accounted for by local dialectical variation. But it is seen that this changed form continued in Tamil even up to the tenth century A.D. The Cōḷa king Parāntaka I, the conqueror of Madurai is designated in his inscriptions by the title *Matirai koṇṭa ko-p-Parakēsari.*

The nature and form of these inscriptions which mainly give out the names of the donors restrict our knowledge of the language to the barest. But still the above would clearly show that the language employed in them was Tamil, and that these records follow the diction and grammar of classical Tamil as gleaned from the earliest grammatical work, the *Toḻkappiyam.*

One peculiarity found in the language of these inscriptions should, however, be noted. In the words *Kutupila, Koṭupilōṉ Koṭupitavaṉ, tacaṉ* etc., used in these records, the doubling of the consonants required according to the rules of Tamil grammar is not met with. Their correct forms should be *kuṭuppitta,*

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56. See *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. VIII, p. 93.

57. It is said that the Southern Madurai, the capital of the Pāṇḍyas, owes its name to Mathurā (*i.e.* the modern Muttra) of Puranic fame in North India.

koṭuppittōṉ, Koṭuppittavaṉ and *taccaṉ*. Probably this peculiarity is due to the influence of Prākṛt. But this dropping of the pure consonants without doubling is met with in the early Tamil inscriptions of the later Pallavas and the early Cōḷas also. This is also met with occasionally in classical Tamil literature. Some of such instances, if not all, may be attributed to the exigencies of metre. Further it is also likely that in those days the hard consonants of the Tamil alphabet were pronounced as surd mutes and the changing of the sounds of these from surd to sonant according to the place of their occurrence in the words take place according to philologists in the speech sound at a later date.

If it is accepted that the language of these inscriptions is Tamil the very pertinent question naturally arises how it is that these early inscriptions of the Tamil country are alone in Tamil and not in Prākṛt, when all the early inscriptions written in the Brāhmī script found all over the country are in the Prākṛt language. It is true that all the Brāhmī inscriptions found not only in North India but also in the Karṇāṭaka and Āndhra areas including the Brāhmī record found at Mālakoṇḍa in the Nellore District on the northern borders of the Tamil country are written in the Prākṛt language. In this connection one important point must be borne in mind. Inscriptions are intended to be read and their contents understood by those who see them, and not incised on rocks and boulders as mere ornamental pieces. That was the main reason why these inscriptions were written in prominent places easy to catch the eyes of persons visiting them. As such the script and language employed should be such as could be easily read and understood by the people of the locality. Therefore, every inscription should be incised only in the local language, if the official language was different and it was not understood in the area. Though Prākṛt which appears to have been the official language in the Mauryan Empire and inscriptions in that language were understood by its subjects, the language of the Tamil country, which lay outside the Mauryan Empire and was independent, was Tamil and conditions in it were different. Probably Prākṛt had not made much inroad into it by the period of these records.[58] Hence these

58. Even in the Prākṛit language of the Aśokan inscriptions various forms due to dialectical variations have been traced.

Brāhmī records had necessarily to be written in the language of the locality, namely Tamil. Under the circumstances it would be wrong and unreasonable to expect these inscriptions to be written in any other language.[59]

But one thing seems to be clear. The basically Tamil language used in these inscriptions was different from the Tamil language used in the Sangam literary works and contains a good proportion of Prākṛt words. Probably the view that the language employed in many of these lithic records 'is Tamil in its formative stages,'[60] may not be quite easy of acceptance though it betrays much unsteadiness in its grammatical and other features showing that 'it was less homogeneous and regular in its characteristics.' Its difference from the literary Tamil from the point of style was obviously due to the fact that—"those who have been responsible for the records in question were obviously Buddhist and/or Jaina (and Ājīvika ?) monks using a hybrid jargon with great admiration for Pāli and/or Prākṛt and they cannot be surely suspected of a strong inclination toward a standardized, polished and correct literary usage."[61] From the third century B.C. Buddhist Jaina and Ājīvika teachers who came to South India and settled down in different localities, learnt the local languages and moved with the people speaking to them obviously in their own languages doing religious work among them winning the affection and respect of at least some of them. The language of these inscriptions is that of these religious teachers and their followers in the Tamil country.

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59. Probably it was the same case with regard to the language of the Cave Inscriptions in Brāhmī found in large numbers in Ceylon. Though it can be classed as a Prākṛt it is distinct from any known language and should be treated only as Sinhalese in its oldest form (see note on these records in the appendix at the end of this chapter.)

60. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 87: also *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. II, *Mauryas and Satavahanas* (1957), p. 501.

61. See Kamil Zvelebil, 'The Brahmi Hybrid Tamil Inscriptions' in *Archiv Orientalni*, 32, (1964) p. 573; also K. K. Pillay, 'The Brahmi Inscriptions of South India and the Sangam Age.' *Tamil Culture* (1956) pp. 175—85, and T. N. Subramanyan, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, p. 1506.

APPENDIX

A NOTE ON THE CEYLON CAVE BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS[1]

Both Krishna Sastri and K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar have in their study of the Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country made pointed references to the cave inscriptions in the Brāhmī script found in Ceylon, and tried to compare the two. But the Ceylon cave inscriptions have not been studied so far with the care and importance they deserve. "Though it is estimated that there are very nearly three thousand cave inscriptions, few have been published and fewer still have been edited in the Archeaological and Epigraphical Journals. Probably their brevity and the stereotyped nature of their contents have dissuaded scholars from spending time upon them."[2] These records are almost all in a very good state of preservation. They are usually incised deep into the rock and the letters are large, so that a person standing at the mouth of the cave may be able to read them. Thus it is possible even to make accurate eye copies of these records without the usual process of ink estampages and photographic copies.[3]

These Brāhmī records which are the earliest inscriptions of Ceylon are found in large numbers inscribed under the drip-ledges of rock caves found among the many outcrops of gneiss such as Vessagiri, Sigiri, Dambulla and Ritigala that dot the northern, eastern and southern plains of the island. Some of them are found inscribed on the surfaces of rocks. Thus from the point of the places where they are found they are similar to those found in the Tamil country.

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1. This note is based mainly on the article "The Brahmi Inscriptions as a Source for the study of the early history of Ceylon" by Dr. S. Lakshman Perera. Published in the *Ceylon Historial Journal*, Vol. I, No. 2; (October, 1951) pp. 78-96, and is intended to invite the attention of the South Indian scholars in general and the Tamil research scholars both in this country and Ceylon.

2. *Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. I. No. 2, p. 86.

3. *Ibid.*, p 87.

The script of these inscriptions is almost the same as the Brāhmī of the Aśokan inscriptions.[4] It appears that there were two stages in the evolution of the Brāhmī script in Ceylon. It is believed that the script comes nearest in form to the Aśokan characters in the first century A.D. and before that period it was less developed.[5] It is also said that by the end of the first century A.D. the Brāhmī script in Ceylon began to develop a bend of its own. Hence these records have been dated roughly from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. However, it is difficult to fix the date of a record definitely "on the basis of palaeographical evidence supplied by the development of the script, except within very wide limits."[6] Apart from such palaeographical considerations, it may be taken that since these records register donations to the Buddhist Sangha, their period must be placed after the introduction of Buddhism in the island; and as side earlier, the island received the religion during the days of Aśoka. Hence the inscriptions may be taken to belong to the period from the third century B.C..

Like similiar cave inscriptions found in the Tamil country, these early inscriptions in Ceylon consist of at the most one or two sentences, set always in the same form. "The language of the inscriptions is Sinhalese in its oldest form. Though it can be classed as Prākṛt it is distinct from any known language. The nature and form of the cave inscriptions however do not permit us to glean from them anything but the barest about the language."[7]

Certain terms like *Aya*, *Parumaka* etc. indicating the status of the donors are interesting. It is said about the *former*: "It also happens that lines of such rulers (*Rāja*) together with princes entitled *Aya* hold sway in areas far removed from the main seat of government." ......Since *Rāja* is a royal title the conclusion to be drawn from this is that they were semi-independent local rulers, who flourished for a time and were finally absorbed by the

4. See *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, pt. 12 ff.

5. C. W. Nicholas, 'Palaeographical Development of the Brahmi Script in Ceylon,' *University of Ceylon Review*, Vol. VII, pp. 60 ff.

6. *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. I, No. 2. p. 87.

7. *Ibid.*

more powerful rulers of the north."[8] It may be noted that this word resembles very much the term *āy* in Tamil indicating the line of petty rulers who held sway over the Vēnāḍu in the early days. It is well known that there was close contact between the Tamil country, especially the Pāṇḍyan territory and Ceylon in those days as even now, and many kings of Pāṇḍyan origin or connection ruled in Ceylon as kings.

The term *parumaka*, though found very frequently in the early inscriptions from Ceylon is difficult of correct explanation. It has been suggested that it may indicate village elders or a class of landed gentry.[9] Very likely it is the Tamil word *perumakaṉ*.

In view of the close proximity of the island to the mainland of India and of the influence of the Pāṇḍyan rulers over the island, it is very likely that traces of the Tamil language also are found in the cave Brāhmī inscriptions in Ceylon. A study of the Ceylon inscriptions from this point of view, which does not seem to have been seriously attempted so far, may possibly bear ample fruit.

8. *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. I, No. 2. p. 90.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 95. Can it mean a village assembly also?

CHAPTER V

THE AUTHORS OF THE INSCRIPTIONS

The earliest inscriptions in the Tamil country are found engraved in the natural caves and caverns in the generally inaccessible heights and slopes of some of the hills in the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tiruchirappalli and Coimbatore and a few in the North Arcot and Chingleput districts in the Madras State. One is found in the Nellore district of the Andhra Pradesh. With some dressing the caves were made fairly fit for human habitation. Not very far from the bustle and noise of the inhabited areas, and yet solemn and quiet, these places were obviously resorted to by religious people who wanted seclusion and calmness for leading a life of contemplation and religious exercise. Some of the caves are found to exist amidst picturesque surroundings and provided with stone beds carved out of rock and water convenience; all of them appear to have served as ideal resorts for the serious and religious minded few devoted to a life of seclusion, high thinking and simple living. The period that may be assigned to the lithic records found in these natural caverns and caves is the second century B. C. to the first century A.D.

The caves and caverns in the Tamil country are associated with the Jains, Buddhists and the Ājivikas, whose arrival and spread formed one of the important aspects of the religious history of South India during the pre-Christian era. These religions appear to have reached the Tamil country in the third and second centuries B.C. when the Mauryan Empire was at the height of its power and influence under its rulers.

To take up first the early history of Jainism in South India. Our knowledge of the coming in of the religion to the south is mainly based on the evidence of a few inscriptions in the Karnāṭaka country and some Jaina sacred books, the traditional accounts contained in which are not always uniform. Both the classes of evidence are of a comparatively late date. In considering these sources and light they throw on the coming in of Jainism to South India one important point has, however, to be borne in mind, namely that the mere coming of a group or

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number of people professing a particular religion to a particular area or territory need not and cannot necessarily mean the spread of the religion in the area. Distinction has to be made between the migration of a religious community to an area and the spread of its religion in that area. This is equally true of Buddhism also.

Among the available epigraphical records bearing on the coming in of Jainism to South India one on the rock called variously as Candragiri, Kaṭavapra and Kalbappu at the celebrated Jaina centre Śravana-Beḷgoḷa in the Channarayapatna taluk in the Hassan District in the Mysore State is the earliest and has been assigned to the sixth century A.D. on palaeographical grounds. The inscription says:

"Bhadrabhāu-svāmi—of a lineage rendered illustrious by a succession of great men who came in regular descent from the venerable supreme Gautama-gaṇadhara, his immediate disciple Lohārya, Jambu, Viṣṇudēva, Aparājita, Govardhana, Bhadrabāhu Viśākha, Proṣṭhila, Kṛttikārya, Jayanāma, Siddhārtha, Dhṛtiṣeṇa, Buddhila and other teachers who was acquainted with the true nature of the eight-fold great omens and was a seer of the past, the present and the future, having learnt from an omen and foretold in Ujjayani a calamity lasting for a period of twelve years, the entire *sangha* (or community) set out from the North to the South and reached by degrees a country counting many hundreds of villages and filled with happy people, wealth, gold, grain, and herds of cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep.

"Then separating himself from the *sangha* and *Ācārya* Prabhācandra by name, perceiving that but little time remained for him to live and desiring to accomplish *samādhi*, the goal of penance associated with right conduct this high peaked mountain which forms an ornament to the earth and bears the name Kaṭavapra[1]............bade farewell to and dismissed the *sangha* in its entirety and in company with a single disciple, mortifying his body on the wide expanse of the cold rocks, accomplished (*samādhi*).[2]

1. The place is called *Kaḷvappu* or *Kaḷbappu* in some Kannaḍa inscriptions.

2. *Epigraphia Carnatica* (Revised Edn.) Vol. II, Tr. pp. 1-2.

There are a few inscriptions that associate Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta with S'ravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa. An inscription of about A.D. 1100 in one of the caves in the hill mentions the worship of the feet of Bhadrabāhu-svāmi.[3] Two inscriptions found on the north bank of the River Kāvērī near Śrirangapaṭṭaṇa of about A.D. 900 say that the summit of the Kaḷbappu hill (Candragiri) was marked by the impress of the feet of the great sages Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta.[4] An inscription at S'ravaṇa-Beḷgola itself of about A.D. 650 refers to the sages Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta and says that the Jaina religion which had prospered under their lead had become weak by then and Śāntisēna revived it.[5] Again an inscription of A.D. 1129 mentions both of them and says that Chandragupta by the merit of being the disciple of Bhadrabāhu was served by the forest deities for a long time,[6] while still another one of A.D. 1163 mentions both of them and says that the sages of Chandragupta's *gaṇa* were worshipped by the forest deities.[7] A still later inscription of A.D. 1432 says that Chandragupta who was a disciple of Bhadrabāhu was bowed to by the chief gods on account of his perfect conduct and severe penance.[8] These traditions about Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta recorded in some inscriptions are supported by a few other pieces of evidence. The smaller hill at the place is said to be called Candragiri on account of the fact that Chandragupta is belived to have perfomed penance there, and the Chandragupta-basti is said to be called so since it was caused to be erected by the Emperor. Besides, a cave on the hill is called after Bhadrabāhu since he is said to have expired in it and the foot prints found there are belived to be his.[9]

Traditions about the association of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta with Śravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa are contained in some Jain literary works of the Śvetambaras and Digambaras. According to the Śvetambara traditions Bhadrabāhu, the fifth Śrutakevalin,

3. *E.C.*, *II*, No. 167.

4. *Ibid.*, III, Nos. 147, and 148.

5. *Ibid.*, II, No. 31.

6. *Ibid.*, No. 67.

7. *Ibid.*, No. 64.

8. *Ibid.*, 258.

9. See *Ibid.*, *Introdn.*, p. 36.

predicted a twelve years famine in Magadha, led the Jaina *sangha* to the Karnāṭaka along with his disciple Chandragupta, and after the famine, returned to North India. He entrusted the leadership of the *sangha* to Sthūlabhadra, the sixth and the last S'rutakevalin and retired to Nepal where he died in 170 A.V. *i.e.* 357 B.C.[10] According to one of the Digambara traditions Bhadrabāhu the fifth S'rutakevalin gave *jīnadīkṣa* to Chandragupta. Predicting a twelve years' famine in Ujjain, Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta migrated with the *sangha* to the Karnāṭaka. When they reached the smaller hill at Śravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa, called Katavapra in Sanskrit, Bhadrabāhu foresaw that his end was drawing near, sent the *sangha* to the Cōḷa and Pāṇdya countries under the leadership of one Viśākhācārya and stayed behind and died on the hill at Śravana-Beḷgoḷa, attended by his disciple Chandragupta. The latter survived his *guru* for twelve years at that place itself and died in 162 A.V. *i.e.* 365 B.C. after welcoming back the emigrants on their return to North India at the end of the famine.

Similar traditions with slight variations are found in a few other Jaina works. One of them, the *Bṛhat-Kathākośa*, a Sanskrit work by Harisena (A.D. 931), contains the following account. Bhadrabahu, who had king Chandragupta as his disciple, predicted a twelve years famine in the country, sent Chandragupta muni who was also called Vis'akhācārya, along with the *sangha* to the south and himself stayed behind, since he thought that his end was approaching. Viśākhācārya led the *sangha* to the Punnāṭa kingdom,[11] in the south. Bhadrabāhu went to Bhādrapada, a part of Ujjain and expired there fasting for many days. After the twelve years' famine ended Viśākhācārya returned to Madhyadeśa with the *sangha*.[12] According to the *Bhadrabāhu carita*, a Sanskrit work by Ratnanandi (C.A.D. 1450), Bhadrabāhu predicted a twelve years' famine in Ujjain and migrated to the Karnāṭaka along with twelve thousand disciples. When he

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10. *Jainasena pūrva Purāṇa*, II, vv. 139-42; M. G. Pai, *Sahitya Parishat Patrika*, XXVI, pp. 2-3.

11. This is the same as *Paunnata* mentioned by Ptolemy and was in the Mysore district with the modern Kittur in the Heggaddevan Kote taluk in the district as its capital (See *Ep. Car.*, Vol. II, *Introdn.*, p. 37. n. 2.)

12. See *Ep. Car*, Vol. II, *Introdn.*, p. 37.

reached a forest he saw that his end was drawing near, appointed Viśākhācārya to his own place and asked him to lead the *sangha* to the south. He stayed behind, attended by Chandragupta, while the others proceeded to the Cōḷa country. Bhadrabāhu then expired, performing *sallekhana*. The sage Chandragupta drew a likeness of his *guru's* feet and was worshipping them. When Viśākhācārya returned, he paid homage at the tomb of Bhadrabāhu, and being duly honoured by Chandraguptamuni, left for Kanykāubja.[13]

Cidānandakavi's (C. A. D. 1680) Kannaḍa work *Maṇivaṁśābhyudaya* contains some information about Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta. According to it when Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu was living in Cikka-beṭṭa in Beḷgoḷa he was perhaps killed by a tiger, and his feet (foot-prints) were even then (period of the composition of the work) worshipped. Dakṣiṇācārya came to the place by order of the sage Arhadbali. Chandragupta, who had also come there on pilgrimage took *dīkṣā* from him and was offering worship to the God in the temple founded by him as also the foot prints of Bhadrabāhu. Later Chandragupta succeeded to the position of Daksiṇācārya,[14] The *Rajāvalikathe* of Devacandra (A.D. 1838) says that Bhadrabāhu predicted to Chandragupta a twelve years' famine, and when it actually commenced, Chandragupta abdicated in favour of his son Simhasena, took *dīkṣā* and joined him. Both of them migrated to the south with twelve thousand disciples. On the way Bhadrabāhu saw that his end was nearing; and stopping at a hill along with Chandragupta, sent Viśākhācarya and his disciples to the Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya countries. On the death of Bhadrabāhu, Chandragupta performed the funeral rites and continued to reside in a cave worshipping the foot prints of his *guru*. Bhāskara, the son of Simhasena and grandson of Chandragupta himself visited the place, stayed there for some time and built some Jaina temples and a city near Candragiri which was named Beḷgoḷa. Later Chandragupta himself died on the hill.[15] With these literary traditions may be compared the epigraphical evidence cited above about the

13. *E.C.*, p. 38.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 38–39.

association of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta with Śravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa.

From the conflicting and contradictory nature of the evidence it is really difficult to say anything definite about the Jaina migration to the Mysore area. But it must be noted that all accounts are agreed on two important points: (i) the prediction by Bhadrabāhu of a famine for a period of twelve years and (ii) the migration of a strong Jaina community to South India. Besides, there is also general agreement on the fact that the Bhadrabāhu with whose name the Jaina migration to the South has been associated was Śrutakevalin of that name who had a disciple in the person of a Chandragupta, who according to traditional belief, was the founder of the Maurya dynasty.

Opinion is divided among scholars about the authenticity of these traditions and the identity of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta. Leumann believes in the traditions and the association of the two with the Jaina migration and says that the Jaina migration to the south was the initial fact of the Digambara tradition.[16] Hoernle who has examined the Jaina *paṭṭavaḷis* or succession lists of *gurus* says: "Before Bhadrabāhu the Jaina community was undivided; with him the Digambaras separated from the Śvetambaras—The Śvetembara *paṭṭavaḷis* know only one Bhadrabāhu, who, from the dates assigned to him by the Śvetambaras and Digambaras alike, must be identical with Bhadrabāhu I of the Digambaras. Considering the varying and the contradictory character of the Digambara traditions, the probability is that the inception of the great separation took place under Bhadrabāhu I, who died in 162 A.V. according to the Digambaras or 170 A.V. according to the Śvetambaras[17]—The Digambara separation originally took place as a result of the separation southwards under Bhadrabāhu in consequence of a severe famine in Bihar, the original home of the undivided Jain community."[18] Hoernle is thus inclined to think that the Jaina

16. *Vienna Oriental Journal*, VII, p. 382; quoted by Rice in his *Mysore and Coorg from Inscriptions*, p. 6.

17. According to Jacobi "the date of Bhadrabāhu's death is placed identically by all Jaina authors from Hemachandra down to the most modern scholiast in the year 170 A.V." (*Kalpastra, sūtra, Intro.*, p. 13).

18. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXI, pp. 59-60.

migration to the south took place under the Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu.

The possibility of there being some truth in the tradition of the migration of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta to the south is, it is claimed, suggested by a few other pieces of evidence also. According to F. W. Thomas, Chandragupta was a confirmed Jain He says "That Chandragupta was a member of the Jaina community is taken by their writers as a matter of course and treated as a known fact which needed neither argument nor demonstration."[18] Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in the court of Chandragupta, refers to the close connection which the emperor had with the Śramaṇas in matters of religion as distinguished from the Brahmans (Brachmanes) and the Buddhists (Boutta), when he says that "They (the Śramaṇas) communicate with the kings, who consult them by messengers regarding the causes of things and who through them worship and supplicate the deity."[19] The S'armanes (Śramaṇas) were obviously the same as the Germanes mentioned by Strabo and Samanaeans mentioned by Porphyrus. It has been suggested that they may have belonged to one sect of Jina or to another.[20] It is possible that even in those early days the Jains were known as Śramaṇas. Aśoka used the term *sangha* while speaking of the Buddhists while he used the word Śramaṇa, when referring to the Jains.[21] It may be noted also that Kuṇḍakundācarya, the earliest of the Ḍigambara Jaina writers of South India, refers to the members of his own sect by the term Śramaṇa.[22]

Thomas was definite that they were the Jains and Chandragupta "submitted to the devotional teachings of the Śramaṇas as opposed to the doctrines of the Brahmans." He further says that the fact that Āśoka was a Jain to begin with and later changed to Buddhism, would also show that Chandragupta was a Jain. Further it has been argued that Chandragupta's

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18a. Thomas, *Jainism or the Early Faith of Asoka*, p. 23.

19. See V. R. R. Dikshitar, *The Mauryan Polity*, pp. 269-73 for a discussion of the question.

20. Colebrooke, *Essays*, II, p. 203.

21. See Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, pp. 168-72.

22. *Pravacana sāra, Introdn.*, p. XXI; Bhandarkar, *Report an Sanskrit Manuscripts*, 1883-84, pp. 97-100; also S. R. Sharma, *Jainism and Karnataka Culture*, p. 7.

Jaina creed is borne out by the facts that, according to the *Mudrārākṣasa* of Viśākhadatta, the Jains occupied an important position at the time of the Mauryan revolution led by Chandragupta, and Cāṇakya employed a Jain as one of his emissaries in the accomplishment of the revolution.[23]

A few other arguments have been advanced to show that Chandragupta changed a Jain and discarded public life. It is said that he ascended the Magadhan throne when he was fairly young, ruled for twenty-four years and then gave place to his son Bindusāra. At that time he could not have been more than fifty years old. There is nothing to show that he either died in battle or died a natural death. In the absense of any evidence of his death, it has been assumed that 'he could have retired from the throne in order to devote himself, in accordance with the dictates of the Jaina religion, to an ascetic life in the last stage of his existence and accompanied Bhadrabāhu to the South, and that might be the explanation of his early disappearance from public notice and of silence regarding his further career, for absolute renunciation of all earthly ties was the essence of the vow he had taken.'[24] According to the South Indian traditions he lived at Śravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa for twelve years after the decease of Bhadrabāhu and died when he was probably sixty-two years of age. Lewis Rice who has accepted all these lines of reasoning thinks that the migration of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta along with a large number of Jains could have been taken place.[25] V.A. Smith was at first inclined to discredit the Bhadrabāhu—Chandragupta tradition as 'imaginative history.' But 'after much consideration' he revised his views and admitted 'the main facts as affirmed by tradition' to have solid foundation in fact and said 'in short the Jaina tradition holds the field and no alternative account exists,' and again "I am disposed to believe that the tradition is probably true in its main outline."[26] Narasimhachar of Mysore also believed in the traditions and observed "the evidence may not be quite decisive, but it may be accepted as a

23. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

24. Rice *Myore and Coorg from Inscriptions*, p. 9

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

26. *Early History of India*, Fourth Edn. (1924) p. 154; *Oxford History of India*, (Revised Edn. 1958), p. 99.

working hypothesis until the contrary is proved by future research."[27]

But there are also scholars who are not disposed to accept the evidence of these traditions about the migration of the Jains to the South in the third century B.C. Among them are Fleet, Shama Sastri and M. Govinda Pai.

Fleet admitted that the Jaina migration to South India may well be a historical fact, whether it started from Ujjain or any other place in North India. But he felt that the association of Candragupta Maurya with the fifth Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu and their migration to Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa cannot be believed because of the discrepant and conflicting nature of the literary and epigraphical evidence relating to them.[28] He was inclined to identify Bhadrabāhu of the traditions with the *Upāngi ācārya* Bhadrabāhu II of Hoernle's *paṭṭavaḷis* of the *Sarasvati Gaccha*,[29] the last but one of the Minor *Angins* who is said to have become pontiff in 53 B.C. He also identified Chandragupta of the traditions with Guptigupta, the disciple of Bhadrabāhu II, and thought that he was also known by the names of Arhadbalin and Viśākhācārya who became pontiff in 31 B.C..[30]

Dhirendra Nath Mookerjee who has examined this question arrives at a similar conclusion and says that it was the Upāngi *ācārya* Bhadrabāhu II, who became pontiff in 53 B.C. and died in 31 B.C., that led the migration to South India and that the monarch Chandragupta who accompanied him was "Chandragupta I Vikramāditya who founded the era of 58 B.C." He adds that "as Bhadrabāhu died in V. S. 27, Chandragupta I left the crown about V. S. 26, and as according to Jaina tradition he lived for twelve years more after Ācārya Bha rabāhu's death, Chandragupta I died about V. S. 39–19 B C. during Samudragupta's rule." He is further inclined to think that Chandra of the Meharauli (Delhi) Iron Pillar Inscription was this Chandragupta.[31]

27. *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Vol. XIII, p. 44.

28. *Ind. Ant.* Vol. XXI, pp. 156-160. *Ep. Ind.* Vol. IV, pp. 22–8.

29. *Ibid*, Vol. XX, pp. 349-51.

30. *Ibid*, Vol. XXI, p. 159.

31. *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XX, pp. 249-274.

Shama Sastri thinks that the Chandragupta of the Jaina traditions was Chandragupta II of the Gupta dynasty and says: "It is possible that it was this Chandragupta, who in his old age embraced Jainism and being moved with pity at the sight of the famished people—left the country in the company of Bhadrabāhu III, a Jain teacher, to spend his days in solitude in Śravaṇa-Beḷgoḷa in Mysore under the rule of his father-in-law (i.e. Mayūraśarman of the Kadamba dynasty, whose daughter, he seems to have married.)"[32]

Govinda Pai, who has examined this question in detail, argues that the Bhadrabāhu who migrated to the Karnāṭaka country with 12,000 Jains was none other than the fifth Śrutakevalin of the name, but his disciple was not Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya dynasty, and the grand father of Aśoka, who continued to be of the Brahmanical faith throughout his life but Samprati, who was the grand son of Aśoka and was also called Chandragupta. He bases his conclusion on the evidence of the *Vaḍḍarādhane*, a Kannaḍa work of Śivakoṭyācārya, which had a Prākṛt original written in North India probably in the second or third century A.D. The antiquity of the Prākṛt work may be judged from the fact that it mentions only three Vedas as also some foreign coins like the *drachma* and *dinara* which were current in parts of North-West India in the period between the second century B. C. and the third century A. D. According to the work, when Samprati Chandragupta was the ruler of Ujjayini, the fifth Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu gave him *jinadikṣa* by his own hands; and fore-seeing a great famine for a period of twelve years, both of them migrated to the Karnaṭaka where the former died at Kaḷbappu, the Kannaḍa form of the Sanskrit word Kaṭavapra Govinda Pai thinks that Bhadrabāhu's death must have occurred in the first half of the third century B. C., since he was a contemporary of Samprati Chandragupta, the grandson of Aśoka and that the date given by the Śvetambaras and Digambaras has to be dismissed as unhistorical.[33]

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32. *Mys. Arch. Report*, 1923, para 67.

33. *Kannada Sahitya Parishat Patrika*, XXVI, pp. 1-21.

But all these theories are difficult of acceptance. It must be remembered that all the traditions are unanimous in saying that it was Bhadrabāhu who could see the past, the present and the future (*trikālajña*) and that predicting a famine in North India migrated to the south. And that could have been the fifth Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu who is said to have possessed such great powers. The identification proposed by Shama Sastri depends very much on the correctness of the date given by him for the commencement of the Gupta Era, namely 200–201 A.D. But this initial date for the Gupta Era has not found favour with scholars. Secondly there is nothing on record to show that in the Gupta period which was a strikingly flourishing age in Indian history there was a great famine in North India which led to the migration of a large number of Jainas to South India. Besides, Chandragupta II was of the Brahmanical faith throughout his life and it is impossible to believe that he could have turned a Jaina. More than all, while the Śvetambara tradition mentions only one Bhadrabāhu, the Digambara tradition mentions two Bhadrabāhus. There does not appear to be any historical or traditional basis to argue that there were three Bhadrabāhus. Dhirendra Nath Mookerjee's attempted identification of the Chandragupta of the Jaina traditions with Chandragupta I of the Gupta dynasty and also with the author of the Meharauli Pillar Inscription, and his statement that he lived just before the commencement of the Christian era have yet to be proved by reliable evidence. Govinda Pai's position seems to be stronger; but it must also prove unacceptable when it is seen that Chandragupta Maurya turned a Jaina and followed Bhadrabāhu to the Karnātaka country after abdicating his throne.

Though there may be some reason for differences of opinion among scholars regarding the period of the advent of Jainism in the Karnāṭaka, there is no reason to doubt the existence of some Jaina settlements in the Tamil country, particularly in the districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tiruchirapalli and Coimbatore in the extreme south of the peninsula in the third and second centuries B.C. But some doubt has been expressed with regard to the region through which Jainism came to the Tamil country, whether it was through Andhradeśa or

the Karnātaka country. To consider them one after the other.

The *Mahāvamśa,* a Buddhist chronicle of the fifth century A.D., while describing the consecration of prince Pāṇḍukābhaya in Ceylon mentions the fresh constructions in Anuradhapura, the new capital, among which was a house for the Nigaṇṭha Jotiya to the east of the cemetery. In that area were living Nigaṇṭha Giri and many ascetics of various heretical sects. The ruler also constructed a chapel for Nigaṇṭha Kumbhaṇḍa which was named after him. The ruler also erected a dwelling for the Ajivikas.[34] The term *Nigaṇṭha* is the Prākṛt form of the word *Nirgrantha,* meaning a follower of the Jaina faith. Since the reign period of Pāṇḍukābhaya has been placed between 377 and 307 B.C.[35], it has been suggested that the building of a house as a temple for the Nirgranthas at the capital must be assigned to the period. From these it has been presumed that Jainism had reached at least the northern part of Ceylon and had attained a position to receive attention from the king of the island. It is further urged that "it also points to the possibility that the Tamil land might have come into contact with the creed of Lord Jaina by the period of the fourth century B.C. or even earlier. For, on account of their proximity, closer relationship subsisted between Ceylon and the Tamil country; and the Jaina missionaries like the protagonists of the Buddhist faith might have naturally preached their doctrine in the latter region, prior to their immigration into the island by the land route through peninsular India."[36] It has further been suggested that Jainism spread to South India from the Kalinga and the Andhra deśa for it is believed that Mahāvira himself visited the Kalinga and laid the foundations for the spread of his doctrine there.[37] Further it is surmised that Jainism must have come to the Tamil country even before the Bhadrabāhu-Chandragupta period, for as said earlier, some traditional accounts relating to the migration of Jainas from North India to the Karnāṭaka country say that Bhadrabāhu at the time of his death nominated his disciple Viśakhācarya as the leader of the Jainas

34. Geiger, *Māhāvaṃśa*, p. 75.

35. *Ibid. Introdn.*, p. xxxvi.

36. P. B. Desai, *Jainism in South India and some Jaina Epigraphs*, p. 26.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 3 and 25

'and asked him to proceed further into the Cōḷa and Paṇḍya countries.[38]

The above conclusions have, it appears, been drawn on very slender evidence. Though the *Mahavamśa* mentions the Nirgranthas and some constructions for them at Anurādhapura during the time of the Ceylonese king Pāṇḍukābhaya in the fourth century B.C., it is not known how much of the account is historical and how much is traditional and legendary. It is well known that the sphere of activity of Mahāvīra was restricted to his homeland; and at the time of his death Jainism had not spread beyond the region where it was born. It does not appear that the activities of Mahāvīra extended beyond the Magadhan kingdom and the adjoining regions in Northern India during his time; and the accounts that associate him with Kalinga are not to be very much relied upon for historical purposes. Further the traditional accounts which mention that Bhadrabāhu sent his disciples Viśakhācārya and all others except one to the Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya countries, even if there is any historical truth in them, do not necessarily mean that the people of the Tamil country 'were already familiar with the doctrine (of Jainism).' It is difficult to believe from the above that Jainism had reached the Tamil country even so early as, the fifth or fourth century B.C.

Therefore evidence about the coming in of Jainism to the extreme south has to be sought for elsewhere; and such evidence is supplied in sufficient measure by a few of the natural caverns in some hills and rocks lying in out of the way places in the southernmost parts of the Madras State. These caverns which appear to have been used for religious purposes were made fit for human occupation and provided wherever necessary or possible with beds cut into them. The beds were chiselled smooth with one side raised a little meant to serve as pillows for persons lying on them. The grooves in the outer fringes of most of the caverns were cut in such a way that rain water was prevented from flowing into them, but was carried off to some distance. Some of the caverns had big holes cut on the open yard, apparently for fixing poles or railings, besides a number of smaller ones which were used obviously in different ways to protect the caves. These oldest monuments in the Pāṇḍya country are also the oldest in

38. *Ibid*., pp. 25-26.

Southern India itself.[39] Locally the hills in which these caverns are found are called *pañcapāṇḍava malai* (the hill of the five Pāṇḍavas). A particular hill in the Madurai district is itself called Aivar-malai (the hill of the five), five being obviously a reference to the Pāṇḍavas. The beds in the monuments are called *pañcapāṇḍava paḍukkai*, popularly translated as the bed of the five Pāṇḍavas. Such a literal translation or interpretation of the two terms does not, however, appear to have much significance, for there is nothing to show that the Pāṇḍavas of the *Mahābhārata* had anything to do with them. Further, in many cases the number of beds are not five in a cavern, but more than twice or thrice the number of the Pāṇḍavas.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, while examining the religious associations of the monuments thinks that they were Buddhist and says that the term *pañcapāṇḍavamalai* "strongly reminds us of the pāṇḍava-pabbata at whose foot the Buddha after his renunciation took his first meal which he had obtained by begging; and this fact suggests that these caves might have been the favourite resorts of Bauddha *bhikshus* who probably had their meals in them, as the name *Uṇḍānkal* 'the rock of one who took a meal' applied to one of them indicates, and should have been called *Pāṇḍavamalai* after the name of the monument where the Great One, whom they followed in every way first resided. In this connection, it is also worthy of note that some of these hills are termed *Kaḻugumalai*, a Tamil rendering of the Sanskrit *Gṛdhra-kūṭa*, the hill occupied by the Buddha during his ascetic life. That this practice of naming monasteries after those (the names of places associated with the life and activities) of the Great One was in vogue in Ceylon also may be gathered from the name *Jētavanārāma* given to one of the monasteries of Anurādhapura, evidently after the one built for the Buddha by the rich merchant Anāthapiṇḍika at Śrāvāsti and in which the Buddha passed several years of his life."[40]

He further thinks that the caverns of the Tamil country have close resemblance to similar early monuments in Ceylon and says that they "go to prove the fact that they must have all

39. See *Ind. Ant.* Vol. XL, pp 210-11.

40. *Proceedings of the Third Oriental Conference*, p. 279.

come into existence at the same time shaped by the same hands and for the same purpose".[41] The close relation between Ceylon and the Tamil country from such early times is borne out by literary evidence. The *Mahāvaṃśa* says, for instance, that Mahinda and the principal *theras* who followed him to Ceylon, besides those of whom Aritta was the chief one, as also a large number of sanctified Ceylonese priests and priestesses spread abroad the Buddhist creed.[42] It has also been suggested that the caverns were used by the Buddhist priests for pious meditation. "Whether they were primarily designed as a provision for the annual retreat initiated by the Buddha when it was ordained that the monks were to keep *vassa* and refrain from peregrination during the hot season cannot now be easily determined........ The doubt raised in the first part of the passage quoted here whether the caverns were designed for the annual retreat or were intended to give a cool resort can be cleared from the reply which Mahinda gave to Tissa when the latter requested the saint to halt in the beautiful garden near his capital on a certain night. The statement of the *thera* shows that the Buddhist monks were prohibited by the rules of their order from staying even in the nearest proximity of cities or villages: in a way it also accounts for the necessity of the caverns".[43]

There are however some difficulties in taking all these early lithic monuments of south India as Buddhist, though it is possible that at least in the third century B.C., Buddhism had reached the Tamil country. As said earlier the main reason put forward by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar to show that they are of Buddhist origin or association is that they resemble in many respects the caverns in Ceylon. But it must be remembered that in spite of their similarity, there are absolutely no Buddhist remains in the caverns in the Tamil country while such remains are found in the caverns in Ceylon. Apart from that, as will be seen from the sequel, many of these caverns in the Tamil country have Jaina associations. Near the caverns at places like Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam, Aḻagarmalai, Muttupaṭṭi, Kiḻavaḷavu, Kaḻugumalai, Sittaṉṉavāśal, S'uṇḍakkāpārai, and a few others are found Jaina

41. *Proceedings of the Third Oriental Conference*, pp. 299-300.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 280-81.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 280.

figures which may be taken as bearing testimony to the Jaina association of these monuments. It may be that some of the Jaina sculptures were made and consecrated at later date on the rocks of the caverns containing relics of an earlier period, such as the beds and Brāhmī inscriptions associated with the Jainas. However they are indicative of the Jaina association of these monuments.

As said earlier most of these caverns are known locally as *pañcapāṇḍava padukkai*. Since even caverns having Jaina association are also so called, there is no particular significance in associating them with the Buddhists and the Pāṇḍavapabbata.

The age of these caverns and the *pañcapāṇḍavapaḍukkais* in them may be determined with the help of the Brāhmī inscriptions engraved on the rocks near many of these caverns or in the caverns themselves, or sometimes on the pillows or beds in them. Palaeographically these inscriptions which bear close resemblance to the cave records of Ceylon of almost the same period and the Bhaṭṭiprolu Brāhmī inscriptions may, as said earlier, be assigned from the third to the first century B.C., though there is much difficulty experienced in deciphering and grouping of the letters and words in them and interpreting them. As will be seen in the sequel, these inscriptions, which record either donations of the caverns to some people or mention the men residing in them, may be assigned to the period to which the caverns themselves belong. The men who resided in these caverns, were not only holy men who belonged to the Buddhist order, but also to the Jaina or Ājīvika orders. Thus there is nothing particularly Buddhist about them. On the other hand they show that quite like Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvikism also had come to the Tamil country by the third century B.C., and some holy men of the Jaina and Ājīvika orders also retired to these caverns and spent their time in seclusion and religious exercise, though it cannot on that account be said that Jainism or the Ājīvika faith had well spread in the region by that time and had large followings.

The early history of Buddhism in south India is still wrapped in considerable obscurity. Like Jainism, Buddhism also appears to have reached South India in the third and second

centuries B.C. While the coming in of Jainism is usually associated with Śrutakevalin Bhadrabāhu and the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta the advent of Buddhism in South India is associated with Aśoka, the grandson of Chandragupta.

A few traditional accounts of its advent into Ceylon would suggest that the new religion had reached the island and South India even before the days of Aśoka. There is a Ceylonese tradition which says that not only Gautama himself but also the three preceding Buddhas were miraculously transported to Ceylon where arrangements were made for its conversion. Gautama himself is said to have made three visits to the island.[44] Again it is said that about the time of the Buddha's death one Vijaya started from Bhṛgukacca (Broach) with 700 followers, conquered Ceylon with the slaughter of many of its ancient inhabitants called Yakkhas (Yakṣas), settled in the island and spread Buddhism in it. He is mentioned as belonging to the Sakya clan, while his nephew Pāṇḍuvāsudēva married a daughter of the cousin of the Buddha. He himself is said to have married a Pāṇḍya princess.[45] On account of the proximity of the Pāṇḍya country to Ceylon and the matrimonial connection mentioned above, it is believed that people in the Pāṇḍya country would have become familiar with Buddhism, though they might not have changed over to the new faith. It is, however, doubtful if these traditional accounts contained in the Ceylonese chronicles may be treated as historically reliable. It is not possible to believe that the Buddha's activities were extended beyond the Madhyadeśa; the places associated with his life were all in North India namely Rājagṛha, the Magadhan capital, Bodhgayā, Banaras, Śrāvasti, Vaiśāli, Nālandā, Pāvā and Kuśinagara.[46] Nor is it likely that Vijaya could have invaded Ceylon and spread Buddhism at such an early period in the island. It is not known from what part of the country Vijaya took his followers to the island. The contemporaneity of Vijaya with the Buddha is not

44. Geiger, *Mahāvaṃśa*, 1, 19ff.

45. See C. W. Nicholas and S. Paranavitana, *A Concise History of Ceylon*, (1961), pp. 21-23.

46. See E. J. Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*, pp. 13-14; K.G. Saunders, *Story of Buddhism*, p. 45; N. Dutt, *Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism and its relation to Hīnayāna*, p. 14.

above suspicion. It may be doubted if it was not the deliberate attempt on the part of the chronicles to make Vijaya's landing in Ceylon synchronise with the *pari nirvāṇa* of the Buddha. These apart, there is no corroborative evidence on the Tamil side to support the tradition of Vijaya's marriage with a Pāṇḍya princess.

Likewise there are traditions about the association of the Buddha with the Tamil country. According to Hiuen Tsang "Talopitu had been frequently visited by the Buddha, and king Aśoka had erected Topes at the various spots where the Buddha had preached and admitted members into his Order......Not far from the south of the capital (Kanchi-pu-lo) was a large monastery which was a rendezvous for the most eminent men of the country. It had an Aśoka Tope, above hundred feet high where the Buddha had once defeated the Tirthikas by preaching, and had received many into his communion. Near it were traces of a sitting place and exercise-walk of the Four Past Buddhas."[47]

There cannot be any difficulty in identifying Talopitu with Toṇḍai-maṇḍalam and Kanchi-pu-lo with Kāñcīpuram. But to put any faith in the account of the Chinese pilgrim regarding the Buddha's activities at Kañcīpuram is wrong; for, as said above, the activities of the Buddha were confined to the Madhyadeśa only. Hence it is difficult to believe that Buddhism had reached the Tamil country and Ceylon even during the life time of the Buddha himself.[48]

Thus since Buddhism could not have reached South India at such an early date, it may be taken that it spread in the Tamil country during the period of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka, the next important epoch in the history of the religion. Traditional accounts of its spread in South India during Aśoka's time contained in the *Mahavamśa* and the chronicles of Hiuen Tsang are largely confirmed by not only Brahmanical sources but also the Edicts of the Emperor. It is a well-known fact that Aśoka occupies a unique position in the history of the spread of

47. T. Watters, *On Yuan Chuang's Travels in India*, Vol. II, p. 226; Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, p. 230.

48. See R. Satyanathier, *Studies in the Ancient History of Tondaimandalam*, p. 2.

Buddhism in India and abroad and he gave it a character, which it had not attained previously. Whatever may be the effect of his missionary activity for Buddhism in the countries to the west of India, there can be no doubt about the success of his missions within India where, on account of his missionary activity the doctrines of Buddhism "spread as far as northern Bengal in the east, Nepal and Kashmir in the north, Gandhara in the west and Ceylon in the south."[49] Traditions of his association with these regions are found to exist in them; and on account of the geographical contiguity of Ceylon and South India it is possible that what he did for Ceylon with regard to the spread of Buddhism should have influenced South India also.

According to the traditions contained in the *Mahāvamśa* there appears to have been close relationship between the mainland and Ceylon from very early times. The *Mahāvamśa* would have us believe that Devānampiya Tissa,[50] the King of Ceylon who was on friendly terms with Aśoka, although they had not met, sent to the Mauryan Emperor "a complimentary mission bearing wonderful treasures." Aśoka who was obviously pleased with the mission said that "he had taken refuge in the law of Buddha and advised the King of Ceylon to find salvation in the same way." He is also said to have sent to the Ceylonese King rich presents including royal insignia and Tissa was crowned for a second time, which probably signifies that he became disciple and vassal of Aśoka.[51] Such close association and intercourse between the Mauryan Emperor and the Ceylonese King made it easy for the former to send religious missions to the island and convert its King and people to Buddhism.

Again according to the *Mahāvamśa* Aśoka held in the seventeenth year of his coronation the Third Buddhist Council at Pāṭaliputra under the presidency of the monk Moggaliputta Tissa (Upagupta in the North Indian texts) and at its end "he sent forth *theras* one here and one there to various countries." It is said that he sent Mahendra with Rāṣṭriya, Uttiya, Sarupala

49. See B. C. Law, *New Indian Antiquary* Vol. II, p. 695.

50. With this title may be compared the Mauryan Emperor's title *Devanāmpriya*. Apparently the Ceylonese King took that title in imitation of Aśoka.

51. See *History of Ceylon*, (University of Ceylon), Vol. I, pp. 132-34.

and Bhadrasara to Lankā (Ceylon). The *Mahāvamśa* says that Mahā Ariṭṭa, the maternal uncle of Moggaliputta Tissa and a great statesman of the day went at the request of his nephew to the court of Aśoka and brought a Bodhi tree along with Mahinda Sangamitra.[52] These traditions are supported by the Pāli canonical work, the *Parivārapāṭha* which was compiled about the beginning of the Christian era.[53]

The Ceylonese chronicles would have us believe that Buddhism was received in Ceylon direct from Magadha as may be seen from the account that Mahendra miraculously flew to the island in the air. It is strange that the chronicles are silent about the Aśokan missions to the Tamil country. This points to the fact that the Ceylonese monks were anxious to record their direct relations with the homeland of Buddhism and Aśoka. As Oldenberg shrewdly observes "the story of Mahinda and his sister seems to have been invented for the purpose of possessing a history of the Buddhist institutions in the island and to connect it with the most distinguished person conceivable—the great Aśoka."[54] It seems that such accounts of the direct relations between Magadha and Ceylon are too fantastic and improbable. It is more likely that Buddhism reached Ceylon through the Deccan and South India with which both the Mauryan emperors and Ceylon had contacts, though it is not improbable that the Aśokan missions were more successful in the island than in the Tamil country. A tradition recorded by Hiuen Tsang associates a Buddhist mission under Mahendra with Malayakūṭa below Drāviḍa, *i.e.*, the Tāmraparṇi country before it went to Simhaḷa. Referring to the place he says:

"(Here) some follow the true doctrine, others are given to heresy. They do not esteem learning much, but are wholly given to commercial gain. There are the ruins of many old

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 139.40.

53. See B. M. Barua, *Inscriptions of Aśoka*, Pt. ii, p. 236. The traditions about Moggaliputta Tissa's efforts to establish Buddhist faith in Ceylon during the time of Aśoka contained in the *Dipavams'a* are indirectly confirmed by the records on the relic caskets of Kōtiputta Kassapa Gotta, Koḍiniputta Majjhima and Gotiputta Dundubhissara from Sañchi and Sonari (*J.R.A S.*, 1905).

54. Introduction to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

convents, but only the walls are preserved and there are few religious followers. There are many hundred Deva (Brahmanical) temples and a multitude of heretics, mostly belonging to the Nirgranthas (Jains)."

"Not far to the east of this city is an old saṅghārāma (monastery) of which the vestibule and court are covered with wild shrubs. This was built by Mahendra the younger brother of Aśoka Rājā. To the east of this is a *stūpa*, the lofty walls of which are buried in the earth...This was built by Aśoka Rājā."[55] Thus these traditions preserved in later writings show that Mahendra had something to do with the spread of Buddhism in the Tamil country. In fact the Ceylonese chronicles give such singularly onesided and often exaggerated account of the close and direct contacts between the island and Pāṭaliputra that one is not able to get a correct idea of the part played by Mahendra in the spread of the religion in South India.

Whatever that may be, it seems probable that Mahendra did something for the spread of Buddhism in the Tamil country. Probably he stayed in the region for some time, most probably at Nāgapaṭṭinam, which was an important centre of Buddhism from early times. This may be inferred from the fact that Hiuen Tsang mentions a monastery built by Mahendra near Tanjavur.[56] Later traditions affirm that there was a Buddhist monastery at Nāgapaṭṭinam which was called *Dharmaśoka Mahārāja vihāra*, apparently named after Aśoka.[57] The great Śaiva revivalist Sambandar mentions the place as a centre of Buddhism.[58] Later still the smaller Leyden grant of Kulōttunga I mentions a Rājēndra śōḷapperumpaḷḷi as also some Buddhist temples at the place.[59] Morco Polo who visited Nāgapaṭṭinam mentions a *stūpa* at the place.[60] All these point to the fact that

55. Beal, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 231.

56. Watters, *Yuan Chuang*, Vol. II, p. 228.

57. See B. M. Barua, *Asoka and his Inscriptions*, p. 352.

58. VII, 252-10. See also M. A. Dorai Rangaswamy, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Tevāram*, Bk. II, pp. 1135-41.

59. *Ep. Ind.*, XXII, p. 276.

60. Henri Cordier, *Marco Polo*, p. 114.

the east coast of the Tamil country, particularly the Nāgapaṭṭinam area had come under the influence of Buddhism during the days of Aśoka, probably on account of the work of missionaries like Mahendra.

The edicts of Aśoka are an invaluable source of information for a study of the life and activities of the Emperor; and but for them, it should be very difficult to recover his true history particularly in view of the fact that "myths and legends have freely and luxuriantly grown round him especially in the tropical climate of Ceylon."[61] These edicts which are incised on rocky surfaces and exquisitely polished pillars of stone contain largely the Emperor's messages and sermons to his people and record his many sided activities. Some of them record his work in connection with the spread of *Dharma* inside and outside his empire. Of them Rock Edicts II and XIII are of particular value on account of the details they contain about his religious missions to South India and Ceylon. In Edict II he records:

"Throughout the domain of King Priyadarśin, Beloved of the Gods, so also in the bordering territories such as Cōḷa, Pāṇḍya, Satiyaputra, Keralaputra, as far (south) as Tāmraparṇī (that of) of the Greek King named Antiochos, or even (those of the Greek) kings who are the neighbours of the said Antiochus—everywhere King Priyadarśin, Beloved of the Gods has arranged for two kinds of medical treatment, that for men and that for animals. The medicinal herbs that are suitable for men and for animals have been caused to be supplied and planted wheresoever these are not to be found. The medicinal roots and fruits too, have been caused to be supplied and planted wheresoever these are lacking. On the roads wells (and the like) have been caused to be excavated and shade trees planted for the enjoyment of men and animals."[62]

The edicts mention the kingdoms and peoples outside Aśoka's dominion as distinguished from the territories and

61. R. K. Mookerjee, *Asoka*, p. 2.

62. See B. M. Barua, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, II. Pt. ii. P. 180. also Hultzsch, *The Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. I, pp. 3-4; R. K. Mookerjee, *op. cit.*, pp. 131.2., D. C. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Aśoka* (1957), p. 40; N. A. Nikam and Richard Mc Keon, (Ed), *The Edicts of Asoka*, p. 27.

peoples within them. The terms used to denote the former are *anta*, *pracamta* or *pratyanta* meaning ruling peoples of the bordering states which were obviously contiguous to his own empire while the territories and people within his empire are referred to by the term *vijita*, which show that they were conquered by him or his predecessors and hence formed an integral part of his empire. To the group of independent kingdoms and people outside the pale of the Mauryan Empire belonged territories of the Cōḷa, Pāṇḍya, Satiyaputra and Keralaputra as far (south) as Tāmraparṇi.

There cannot be any difficulty in identifying this group of five territorial units and peoples. This first independent territory to the south of the Mauryan Empire was that of the Cōḍas or Cōḷas. Their northern boundary appears to have been coterminous with the southern boundary of Aśoka's Empire. It is possible to form an idea of the southern boundary of Aśoka's Empire by a study of the distribution of his edicts. A careful study of them would show that while the Pillar Edicts of the Emperor are found in important towns and cities in the Empire, his Rock Edicts are found near the borders in different directions. In the south are found three groups of Minor Rock Edicts on hills on the Chinna Heggari river at three different places namely Siddhapura (supposed to be Asila of Minor Rock Edict I), Jatinga Rāmeśvara and Brahmagiri, all in the Chitaldrug district in the Mysore State, a version of the Rock Edicts and Minor Rock Edicts at Yarragudi in the Kurnool District, a version of the Minor Rock Edict at Rajula Mandagiri, a place near Yarragudi itself and a version of Minor Rock Edict I (which mentions the Emperor by his name), all in Andhra Pradesh.[63] If these be taken as indicating the approximate southern boundary of the Mauryan Empire under Aśoka it may be marked by a line drawn from the west coast near 14° of latitude and reaching the east coast near 13° of latitude. V. A. Smith felt that "the southern frontier of the empire of Aśoka may be described approximately by a line drawn from the mouth of the Peṇṇār river near Nellore on the Eastern coast through Cuddapah and to the south of Chitaldrug to the river Kalyāṇapuri on the west coast."[64] Probably it extended even

63. Hultzsch, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii; *Archaeology in India*, 1953—54. p. 13.
64. *Early History of India*, p. 163.

farther south and included the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam area also. Such a possibility is borne out by Ptolemy. His description of the Tamil country would seem to show that there were at that time two Cōḷa kingdoms with two capitals, one in the south with Orathoura 'the royal city of Sornagas' (Cōḍanāgas) and the other in the north with its capital at Arkatos."[65] Orathoura and Arkatos have been identified respectively with Uragapura (Uraiyūr) in the modern Tiruchirapalli Municipal limits and the other with Arcot in the North Arcot District.[66] But Arkatos may with greater probability be identified with Arkadu near modern Tanjavur.[67] If the identification is correct, and if there is any basis for the later traditions which associate Aśoka with Kāñcīpuram, it may be taken that the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam region formed part of the Mauryan Empire and extended upto the R. Peṇṇār or Gaḍilam in the South Arcot District."[68]

The next piece of territory said to have been outside the Mauryan Empire was that of the Pāṇḍyas which lay to the south-southwest of the Cōḷa territory. Ptolemy refers to the Pāṇḍyas as Pandinoi and their Capital as 'Modoura.' Obviously there was only one Pāṇḍya kingdom as may be inferred from the fact that while Ptolemy mentions two Cōḷa kingdoms, he mentions only one Pāṇḍya kingdom. In some versions of Minor Rock Edict II,' the Pāṇḍyas are mentioned in plural which would show that the term denotes either the country over which the Pāṇḍyan dynasty ruled or a ruling people.[69] The exact boundary

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65. See Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, p. 539. See also *Caldwell, Comparative Grammar*, p. 93.

66. See for a discussion of the identification of the places by the author, *J.I.H.*, XLIII, pp. 20-21.

67. See for a discussion of the question by the author his furth coming book *Kancipuram in Early South Indian History*.

68. In some versions of the Minor Rock Edicts Cōḍa is mentioned in plural; and its significance may be explained by the existence of two Cōḷa Kingdoms. B. M. Barua suggests that the Cōḷa country had at that time rather a republican or national than a monarchical form of government. (See his *Inscriptions of Asoka*, Vol. II, p. 231; also H. C. Ray Chaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 271.)

69. See Barua, *Op. cit.*, p. 233.

of the Pāṇḍya territory is hard to fix, though it is possible that it could have included the present districts of Madurai, Ramananthapuram, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari in the Madras State.

The Keraḷaputras mentioned in the Aśokan inscriptions were obviously the Cēras who ruled over the region to the west of the Kingdoms of the Pāṇḍyas and the Cōḷas. Their capital was Vañji, the identification of which place has been a subject of keen controversy among scholars, some identifying it with Tiruvañjikkaḷam on the River Periyār and some with Karur in the Tiruchirapalli district. In the solution of the problem two new inscriptions have also to be taken into account. A Brāhmi inscription near Pugaḷūr in the Karur taluk mentions one Kośipan Ātaṇ.[70] The word reminds one of Ātaṇ, a name borne by a few Cēra Kings. A Cōḷa inscription mentions Karuvūr *alias* Vañjimānagar in the Vēngāḷa nāḍu a sub-division of Vīra-śōḷa maṇḍalam.[71]

The next country mentioned in Aśoka's inscriptions as being independent of him and outside his empire is that of the Satiyaputa (or Satiyaputra). The identification of this country is again a subject of much difference of opinion among scholars. R. G. Bhandarkar was inclined to identify it with the coastal region 'situated along the Western ghats and the Konkan coast below' on the ground that 'along the westernmost portion of the Deccan tableland we have Mahratha, Kayastha, and Brahman families bearing the surname *satpute* which cannot but be treated as a modern transformation of Asoka's *Satiyaputa*'.[72] S. K. Aiyangar treated *Satiyaputra* as a collective name of the various matriarchal communities like the Tulus and the Nayars of Malabar and located them in the region north of Cochin.[73] B. M. Barua is of the view that from the location of Aśoka's Rock and Minor Rock Edicts, "it may be inferred that the country of *Satiyaputa* or *Satiyaputra* lay along the west coast of South India to the south of Sopara and the Chitaldrug

70. *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy*, 1927-28, No. 348.

71. *Ibid.*, No. 335.

72. See B. M. Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

73. *J.R.A.S.*, 1919, pp. 581. ff.

District of Mysore, to the west of Mysore and the north of Keralaputra.[73a]

K. G. Sesha Aiyar is inclined to identify on philological grounds the Atiyamāns of the S'angam age with the Satiyaputra of Aśoka's inscriptions. He says: "the initial *a* (in Atiyamān) becomes *ha*, which again becomes *sa* in Prakṛt; and *man* is abbreviation for *magaṉ* which means *putra*; and thus Atiyamān becomes Satiyaputra on the analogy of Cēraman equals Kēraḷaputra....... The identification here suggested of Atiyamān with Satiyaputra satisfactorily accounts for the presence of the particle *i* in the name appearing in Aśoka's edict".[74] Considering also the political set up of the Tamil country during the period the suggestion of Sesha Aiyar seems to be acceptable. In identifying the Satiyaputras, the order in which the South Indian powers outside the Mauryan Empire under Aśoka are mentioned has to be taken into account.

The Tamil country may be vertically divided into two halves, the east and the west. In the former are mentioned first the Cōḷas and then the Pāṇḍyas. In the latter are mentioned first the Satiyaputras and then the Kēraḷaputras. In the same way as the Cōḷas were to the north of the Pāṇḍyas in the eastern half, the Satiyaputras must have been to the north of the Kēraḷaputras in the western half. If that be so, it is not improbable that the Satiyaputras were the same as the Adigaimāns of Tagaḍūr, who had an important place in the political set up of the Tamil country obviously from the days of the Mauryas, themselves. Probably they were the same as the Malavars, an ancient tribe in the Tamil country, as may be gleaned from the references to them in early Tamil literature.[75]

Thus the edicts of Aśoka under consideration definitely show that as part of his activities for the promotion of *Dharma*, the

73a. B. M. Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 234. A few other identifications have been attempted. See, for instance, *Indian Culture* Vol. I. pt. iii, pp. 493-96. *Krishnaswami Aiyangar Commemoration Volume*, pp. 33-47. Also 'Lithic Monuments in Early South India' by V. R. R. Dikshitar, *J.I.H.*, XXVIII, pp. 79-85.

74. *Cera kings of the Sangam Age*, p. 18; also *B.S.O.A.S.*, XII, (1948) pp 135-7 and 146-7 for a discussion of the question by Burrow.

75. For instance *Maḻavar Perumagaṉ* (*puṟam*, 88-90). See *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XXXII 1954, pp. 229-32; See also XLII, 1964. pp. 877-85 for an examination of the question by N. Subrahmanyan.

Mauryan Emperor undertook also the provision of amenities for the material comfort of man and beast not only within his dominions, but also among others, the independent kingdoms and peoples bordering on his empire (*antas, pracantas or pratyantas*) namely the Cōḷas, Pāṇḍyas, Kēraḷaputras and Satiyaputras and Tāmraparṇī (Ceylon) and the neighbouring kingdom of Antiyaka (Antiochus).[76] And on account of such close contact with the Tamil country and Aśoka's efforts, it is not improbable that Buddhism spread in the area during his time. His activities connected with the spread of the religion in the Tamil country are also suggested by some pieces of literary traditions. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang connects Aśoka with Kāñcipuram and records that he noticed at the place a *stūpa* about 100 feet high built by the Mauryan Emperor as also the remains of an old monastery, built by his brother Mahendra on the east side of the capital.[77] Again according to some old Pallava charters one of the mythical ancestors of the Pallava kings of Kañcī is said to have borne the name Aśokavarman, which is obviously "a modification of the name of the ancient Mauryan king Aśoka." This is further supported by the evidence of the *Rajatarangiṇī* containing a traditional account of the history of Kashmir.[78] Taking these pieces of evidence into consideration, it is not improbable that Aśoka had something to do with Kāñcī and the Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam region, or at least his father Bindusāra, during whose time, the Mauryan Empire appears to have been tried to be expanded far into the Tamil country.[79] Whatever may be the real nature and the

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76. Again Aśoka's missionary activities outside his empire are mentioned in his thirteenth rock edict. Giving an account of the measures he took for the spread of *Dharmavijaya*, he says: "And what is *Dharmavijaya*, moral conquest, is considered by His Sacred Majesty both here (in his dominions) and among all the frontier people even to the extent of 600 *yojanas* where (are) the Yona king Antiochus by name and beyond that Antiochus, the four kings named Ptolemy, Antiogonos, Magas and Alexander; below the Cōḍas, Pāṇḍyas as far as Tāmraparni. (Hultzsch, *op. cit*, pp. 69-70.)

77. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, II, p. 230.

78. See also *Journal of Indian History*, XIV, p. 149.

79. The possibility of the invasion, conquest and probable temporary occupation of at least parts of the Tamil country by Bindusara about 278 B.C. is suggested by the evidence of Taranatha, the

actual period of the occupation of the Tamil country by the Mauryas, Aśoka's name became closely associated with Kāñcīpuram.

Taking all these pieces of evidence into account it may be taken that Mahendra and the Buddhist missionaries who went to Ceylon could have embarked for the island from the east coast of the Tamil country,[1] probably from Kāñcipuram or Nāgapaṭṭinam, though Ceylon had also possibly direct and close connections with Magadha. It is equally possible that South India received Buddhism direct through the missionaries of Aśoka rather than from Ceylon, though on account of the close proximity of the Tamil country to the neighbouring island and the cultural relations between them from immemorial times, the Buddhist activity in the mainland could have been influenced in some ways by the monks of the order in Ceylon.

Like the Jains and the Buddhists, the Ājivikas also appear to have penetrated into the Tamil country by the third or second century B.C. Considerable sections of the population seem to have been attracted to this faith which had taken a deep root in the country and had attained good progress apparently with large patronage. This becomes clear from the evidence of classical Tamil literature and Tamil inscriptions. The *Śilappadikāram* mentions Mānāykan, father of the heroine Kaṇṇaki, on hearing of the tragedy and the death of his daughter of Madurai "gave away his wealth in religious gifts and adopted *dharma* in the presence of the Ājivikas like sages engaged in penance of a high order."[80] The *Maṇimēkalai* also refers to the leaders of the faith. The heroine Maṇimēkalai, after many adventures in the course

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Tibetan historian who says that the Emperor overthrew sixteen kingdoms lying between sea and sea, the Hāthigumpha Inscription of Khāravela which says that he (Kharavela) dismembered in his eleventh regnal year the *tramiradeśa sanghatam* (the league of the Tamils which had been in existence for 113 years) and the Tamil traditions recorded by Māmūlanār. (See K. P. Jayaswāl, *An Imperial History of India*, p. 16; *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XX. pp. 86-9; S. K. Aiyangar, *Beginnings of South Indian History*, pp. 87 and 90 and *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. II, *Mauryas and Satavahanas* p. 500)

80. *Śilappadikāram*, Canto. XXVII, *Nirppaḍaikkāḍai ll.* 89.90; *Kaṭavuḷar, kōlattu aṇṇaḷam peruntavattu Āśivakar* (saints) with the mien of Gods, (Ājivikas performing severe penance'. Also Tr. by V.R.R. Dikshitar, p. 308.

of her religious quest arrives at Vañji, the Cēra capital, where she finds many teachers of different religious sects among which the Ājīvikas were one.[81] Besides, the *Nīlakēśi*, a Jaina work of the eighth or ninth century written on the model of the *Maṇimēkalai*, and the *Śivajñānaśittiyar* of the thirteenth century also contain references to the doctrines of the Ājīvikas. Further, an inscription of the eighth regnal year of a Narasimha Pōtavarman in characters of the eighth century A. D. found in the Kāmākṣi Amman temple at Kāñcīpuram mentions the *Ājīvika darśann* and the temple of Arivar the All-knowing.[82]

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81. Canto. XXVI *Śamayakkaṇakkar tamtiram keṭṭa kātai* 11. 108-165; also S.K. Aiyangar, *Maṇimēkalai in its Historical Setting*, pp. 193 4. The teacher who explained the doctrines of this sect is called there "the elder (*Pūraṇan*) knowing the book of the Ājīvikas." (1.108—*Āśīvaka nūl aṛinda Pūraṇan*.)

82. *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, 360 of 1954-55; *Rep*, p. 16 *Indian Archaeology, a Review*, 1954-55, p 28; The information about the Ājīvikas is very fragmentary. The first connected account of them is contained in an article by Hornle in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. The next work on the subject is by B.M. Barua, published in the Department of Letters (Calcutta University Vol. II. pp. 1-80). The latest full-length study of them is by A. L. Basham (*The History and the Doctrines of the Ajivikas*). With the exception of the work of Basham the studies of the other scholars appear to be based mainly on the references to the sect in the Buddhist and Jaina source in Pāli and Prākṛt and occasionally in the Sanskrit sources of later periods. Dr. Basham is the first scholar to have utilised the information available in some of the Tamil sources in his study on the history and doctrines of the Ājīvikas.

Makkhali Gośāla is considered as the founder of this sect. (The name Makkhali Gośāla is found in the Pāli Canon. In Buddhist Sanskrit works it usually becomes Maskarin Gośāla. But the *Mahāvastu* and some other works have the form *Gosalaka putra* and *Gosali putra*. The Jaina scriptures reverse the two names and mention him as *Gośala Mankhaliputta*. In the Tamil books his name is given as Maṛkali.) But there are numerous indications to show that ascetics referred to as Ājīvikas existed before the time of Makkhali Gōśāla and that the Ājīvika order preserved recollections of prophets who preceded him. Evidently Gośāla was their greatest leader who reorganised the faith and gave it a firm footing.

Makkhali Gośāla is believed to have been a contemporary of the Buddha and Mahāvira. The Jaina work *Bhagavati sūtra* mentions that Gośāla was a disciple in asceticism of Mahāvira and that both of them were living together and undertaking peregrinations. They were together for six years, (or seven years according to another source), when they parted company owing to differences.

The earliest datable and epigraphical reference to the Ājīvikas is found in the inscriptions of Aśoka. The seventh Pillar

Thereafter Gośāla is said to have claimed himself as a *Tīrthankara* and lived as a religious teacher. He is referred to in the Pāli texts of the Buddhists with the stock formula applied to the teachers of all the six heretical sects: "as the leader of an order (*Gaṇācāriyo*) welknown, famous, the founder of a sect (*Titthakaro*), respected as a saint (*sādhu sammato*) revered by many people, a homeless wanderer of long standing (*cirababaji to*) and advanced in years.

The names of Nanda vaccha and Kisa Sankiccha are linked with that of Makkhuli Gośāla in various contests of Gośāla, and occupying an honoured place in the hagiology of the sect. Two other names Purāṇa Kassapa and Pakudha Kaccāyana are also found mentioned in Buddhist literature in relation to this sect. While Purāṇa figures prominently in Tamil literature Pakudha, whose other cognomen or surname is spelt variously as Kaccana, Kaccanya, Katiyano (meaning thereby Kātyāyana), is not specifically mentioned in Tamil literature; but his seven-element theory is recognised and referred to in the *Śivañjānasittiyār*. The last two were probably the persons who had finalised and placed the finished doctrine of the sect on a firm footing.

The Ājivikas had a canon of sacred texts in which their doctrines were codified. In the Tamil sources this is referred to as *Acīvaka-nūl* (the book ot the Ājivikas or *Maṟkalinūl* (the book of Markali, *i e.*, Makkhali Gośala). It is also known as *onpatu katir*, or *nava-katir* (the Nine Rays in Tamil). But in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* it is said that their canon consisted of the eight-fold *Mahānimitta* (i.e. *aṣṭa-mahānimitta*) extracted from the *pūrvas* with the (two) Maggas (*Ubhayamarga* the two-fold path) making the total ten. It is said that these were extracted by six *diśācaras* (whose names are also given there). When they visited Makkhali Gośāla in the twenty-fourth year of his asceticism when he was staying at Śrāvasti (Sovatthi) examining hundreds of opinions, they were approved by Gośāla.

The names of the eight *angas* of the *mahānimitta* are the following:

1. *Divyam* (of the divine).
2. *Autpatam* (of portents).
3. *Antarikṣam* (of the sky).
4. *Bhauman* (ot the earth).
5. *Angam* (of the body).
6. *Svaram* (of the sound).
7. *Lakṣaṇam* (of characteristics) and
8. *Vyañjanam* (of indication).

In one place *suvine* (*svapna* or dream) is found substituted for the first *anga*, *i.e*, *divyam*. It will be clear that these are systems of prognostication. There are many references in literature that the Ājivikas often acted as astrologers or readers of omens. (The

Edict issued in the twenty-seventh year of his coronation describes the imperial policy for the propagation of *Dharma* and especially the duties of the officers of public Morale (*Dharma mahāmatras*).[83] These officers were of four different divisions and busy with different religious groups. (a) Buddhist *Sangha*, (b) Brāhmaṇas, (and) Ājīvikas (*Babhanesu Ājīvikasu*) (c) Nirgranthas or Jainas and (d) various other sects.[84] These show the influence and condition of the Ājīvika community in those days. The Ājīvikas appear to have developed as an influential religious community or sect like the Jainas and the Buddhists. Again the inscriptions in the artificial caves in the Barabar hills, fifteen miles north of Gayā mention the dedication of the caves to the Ājīvikas.[85] The nearby hill of Nāgārjuni contains three similar caves, which were

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Jaina scriptures explicitly forbid the Jaina *Bhikkhu* from practising these arts. But they were practising them. Kālakācārya is said to have learnt these *mahānimittas* from the Ājīvikas. And an inscription from S'ravaṇa Belgoḷa states that Bhadrabāhu knowing the eight-fold *mahanimittas*, seeing past, present and future, foretold in Ujjayini a calamity of twelve years' duration).

The two *maggas* are said to be those of song and dance, and very likely represent texts containing directions for religious songs and ritual dances respectively.

The *Pūrvas* from which the Ājivika scriptures were supposed to have been extracted represent, according to the Jainas, the *Pūrvas*, the earliest scriptures of this sect, which are however lost. These *Pūrvas* are said to be fourteen in number, and only later redactions of the same are now available. The titles of these lost *Pūrvas* of the Jaina tradition do not bear any resemblance to those of the Ājivikas. But it is not unlikely that the *Pūrvas* from which the scriptures of both the religions had been framed were one and the same forming the parental stock. Most probably the word *Pūrva* in the text should be interpreted not in the specialised Jaina sense, but merely as past traditions.

From the available evidence it is seen that there were similarities, sometimes very striking both in the doctrines and practices of these two sects. This charge of plagiarism is a further indication of the close connection between Ājivikism and Jainism in their origin.

83. Hutzsch, *Corpus inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. I, pp. 131 ff.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 136 11. 15-16.

85. *Ibid.*, pp. 181 ff.

dedicated to the Ājīvikas by Aśoka's grandson and successor Daśaratha.[86]

The Ājivika faith appears to have spread in the south even from its inception. Reference has been made earlier to the mention made in the *Mahāvamśa* of the consecration of dwellings for the Ājīvikas along side of the Nirgranthas by Pāṇḍukābhaya (B.C. 377-307). If this account is to be believed the faith had reached the island by at least the fourth century B. C., obviously through South India and the Tamil country.[87]

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86. It is to be noted in this connection that though these inscriptions are all well-preserved, the word Ājivika is found mutilated deliberately. Still the word can be read and restored with certainty in spite of this wanton attempt in later days.

87. I have also consulted the relevant portion of the thesis *Jainism in South India* (unpublished) by R. Champakalakshmi for writing this section.

APPENDIX

Date of the Inscriptions

The date of these Brāhmī label inscriptions has also baffled scholars. The inscriptions have been conjecturally assigned to the third century B. C., based mainly on the shape of the characters employed in writing them. The script of these records, as has been said earlier, resembles in many respects the characters employed in the Ceylon cave inscriptions of almost the same period on the one hand and the alphabets of the inscriptions found at Bhaṭṭiprōlu on the other. Judging largely from the general appearance of the letters of the Bhaṭṭiprōlu writing, Bühler thinks that of the ten inscriptions from the place the last one belongs to the same time as those of Aśoka, while the first nine 'are also probably only a few decades later than Aśoka's edicts.' His opinion is that they are on the whole much more closely allied to the epigraphs of the third century B. C. than to those of the second and that they cannot be placed later than 200 B. C., but may even be a little earlier. From a close study of the records, he came to the conclusion that during the third century B. C. several well-marked varieties of the Southern Mauryan alphabet must have existed with a perfectly worked-out system. In some respects they were radically different from the Aśokan ones, though it may be reasonably supposed that they were contemporaneous with the edicts of the Mauryan Emperor. But the system seen in the Southern Mauryan alphabet should have had a long history, and could not have sprung up in a short time.[1]

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the conclusion of Bühler seems to receive strong support from these Brāhmī epigraphs of the Pāṇḍya country under study. He draws pointed attention to the new symbols designed to represent alphabetic sounds not found in Sanskrit but only in Tamil, and also the forms of the two letters *ya* and *ma* as found in these inscriptions which have been examined earlier. As regards the forms

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1. See *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. II, p. 235; *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXIII, Appendix, p. 8.

of the letter *ma*, "it differs markedly both from the Aśokan and the Bhaṭṭiprōlu types, and consists of a broad tube opening upwards with a horizontal (cross) bar inserted almost in the middle of the tube. This formation of the letter leaves on one the impression that it must be the original form from which the Bhaṭṭiprōlu and Aśokan *ma*-s were developed and that these inscriptions in the Pāṇḍya country might be much older. Though such a view would be quite legitimate, I am rather inclined to think that the southerns had retained the original form, while it changed almost into a semi-circle with two short strokes in the Mauryan and Bhaṭṭiprolu types, the difference in the latter two being that one is topsyturvy to the other. Judging from the Bhaṭṭiprōlu form of this letter, Dr. Būhler was inclined to the belief that the southern *ma* should have originally consisted of a circle or semi-circle with two strokes below and that the Mauryan form must have been obtained by turning it upside down. A careful comparison of the three forms would rather indicate that the earliest form should have been a tube with cross bar in the middle as seen in the Pañcapāṇḍavamalai epigraphs and the developments of this are the ones found in the Mauryan and the Bhaṭṭiprōlu inscriptions."[2]

It will be seen from the above that he, along with Krishna Sastri and others, was inclined to assign a rather very early date for these Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country.

It must, however, be remembered that all this was written very many years before the Brāhmī inscriptions at Pugaḷiyūr and Māmaṇḍūr as also the inscribed potsherds at Arikamēḍu near Pondicherry and Uṟaiyūr (Tiruchirapaḷli) were obtained. The palaeographical chart of select letters from early South Indian cavern inscriptions and the inscribed potsherds from Arikamēḍu given here[3] would enable one to make a comparative study of the letters.[4]

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2. *Proceedings and Transactions of the Third All India Oriental Conference*, pp. 282-83.

3. See fig. No. 12.

4. The writings on the Arikamēḍu potsherds which have close resemblance to the script of the cavern inscriptions under study appear to be different from the *graffiti* scratched or incised into the slip or any other surface treatment of the pottery usually associated with the megalithic culture. The latter were marks

The excavations at Arikamēḍu are of more than ordinary interest to student of South Indian History. " For the first time Arikamēḍu provides a firm datum line from which the classification of pre-medieaval South Indian Cultures can begin." It has thrown much unexpected light on the palaeography of the Brāhmī script. The following is said about it :—

1. There is general similarly between the characters of the Arikamēḍu *graffiti* and the cavern inscriptions of the Tamil country. All these letters in them have practically the same shape except two, *ma* and *ra*. *Ma* in the Māmaṇḍūr inscription conjecturally assigned to the third century B. C. is of the angular variety, but at Arikamēḍu it is a loop with a cross-bar as in the Sittanavāśal and other cavern inscriptions. The letter *ra* is just a straight line at Arikamēḍu and in the cavern inscriptions at Madurai and Tirunelveli districts, while it is a slightly zigzag line in the Māmaṇḍūr record. The other letters have practically the same shape in both.

The letter *ḻa* has a more circular from in the cavern inscriptions, whilst at Arikamēḍu it has the almost modern open form. This would suggest a later date for the Arikamēḍu *graffiti*.

The characters of the Arikamēḍu *graffiti* may bc closely compared to those of the Bhaṭṭiprolu Brāhmī inscriptions which, according to Bühler, may be assinged to the "time immediately after Aśoka or about 200 B. C."

They may be compared also to the Hāthibāḍā and Ghosūṇḍī inscriptions which have been assigned by Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar

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of different types which were once considered to be either potters' marks or owners' marks and now as auspicious signs. Yazdani thought that some of the *graffiti* represent characters like the Egyptian hieratic script used to express ideas. According to him "75 percent of them are identical with the alphabetical signs given by Evans in his Comparative Table showing the relation in Cretan and Aegean, Egypto Libyan and Libya writings." (*Annual Report of the Archaeological Department, H. E. H. The Nizam's Dominions*, 1915-16 and 1917-17, pp. 9-10 and 5-8 respectively; also 'Megalithic Remains of the Deccan, New Feature of them' *Journal of the Hyderabad Archaeological Society*, 1917, pp. 56-79) But the writings on the potsherds at Arikamēḍu and Uṟaiyūr are in the Brāhmī alphabet.

to the beginning of the first century B. C. Slight differences are seen here:

While in the Hāthibāḍā and Ghosūṇḍī inscriptions the arms of *a* on the left are a little round, in the Arikamēḍu *graffiti* they are angular;

While in the former the cross-bar of *ka* is found above the centre of the vertical line, in the latter it is at or a little below the centre.

The bottom of *pa* is a little angular in the former, while it is fully round in the latter.

The letter *ma* has a more developed shape in the former than in the latter.

The letter *va* has a flattened base in the former.[5]

These differences, as also a comparison of the Arikamēḍu inscriptions with other Brahmī inscriptions, particularly those found in the north, would incline one to take them to belong to the first or second century B.C. But the date of the pottery at the place is indicated by its association with dated antiquities in the first century A.D. or a near date. This would suggest a discrepancy between the palaeographical and archaeological evidence. But the reason for this however is not far to seek. In the words of Dr. N. P. Chakravarti it may be explained as follows:—

"The script of the Arikamēḍu pottery and the early rock-shelters of the Madura and Tinnevelly Districts seems to be more akin to the ancient Drāvidi script than the regular Brāhmī as found in the edicts of Aśoka and other early inscriptions. We also know that the Draviḍi script must have separated from the main stock of Brāhmī much earlier than the time of Aśoka, at the latest in the fifth century B.C. (Bühler, 'Indian Palaeography' *Indian Antiquary* XXXIII, appendix, p. 8.). This is undoubtedly the reason why so many archaic forms are noticed in the few inscriptions so far known in the Drāviḍi script. The development of forms after separation could not be so fast in

5. *Ep. Ind.*, XXII, pp. 199 ff. and XVI, pp. 25 ff. See also *Ancient India*, (Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India) No. 2, p. 111.

Drāviḍi as in the regular Brāhmī, which continued to be used throughout the whole of India. If we bear this point in mind, it would not be unreasonable to assume that, though the script of the Arikamēḍu *graffiti* appears to be similar to the script of the Brāhmī inscriptions of the first and second centuries B. C. it actually should be relegated to a later period. If this assumption is correct then the so called discrepancy between the palaeographic and the archaeological evidence would seem to disappear."[6]

Apart from this, the language of these cavern inscriptions has also to be taken into account. It has been seen above that these inscriptions are in the Tamil language. It is recognised among scholars that Tamil had a highly developed literary form in the early centuries of the Christian era, if not earlier. Hence it must have had a fairly long anterior background. Its beginnings cannot be easily determined. They may probably be traced back to about 500 B. C. and from that time onwards it must have existed or grown as a *patois*, to be possible for the language to reach high efforescence in the Ṣangam literature, usually assigned by scholars from the second to the fourth century A. D. Considered from that point of view, these label inscriptions may be assigned to the period before the commencement of the 'Sangam age.'

These considerations would push the latest limit to the date of the Brāhmī records of the Tamil country to the first century A. D. or near date. But the earliest limit would still remain the third century B. C. or the period of Aṣoka from whose time only the lithic records of India have become available and in whose time emissaries were sent to different parts of the country to propagate his *Dharma*. And a careful study of these earliest records from the Tamil country would point that not all of them belong to the same period. They distinctly fall into two groups, those following the Drāviḍi style of marking the medial vowel *a* both long and short, and those not following that style. Some of the inscriptions like those found at Marugāḷtalai, Ṣittannavāṣal Uṇḍānkal etc. follow the principle of the Bhaṭṭiprōlu records

6. *Ancient India*, 2, pp. 109.11. It may be noted in this connection that the Bhaṭṭiprōlu records have been assigned to a period much later than 200 B. C. by Dr. D. C. Sircar. (*Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I. p. 215. n. 1.)

in indicating the medial vowel *a* both short and long with one and two strokes to the right of the consonant character, treating the same as a basic or pure vowelless one, while some others like those found at Māmaṇḍūr, Pugaḻiyūr, Kuṉṉakkuḍi etc. do not follow the above principle, but write in the ordinary way like the Brāhmī records of the areas where the standard value is assigned to the symbols. It is not very likely that these two varieties could have been in use contemporaneously. The should be assigned to different periods, one following the other.

It is rather difficult to declare unequivocally which of the two is earlier. Arguments might be brought forward on both sides in support of the respective positions. But one thing is certain. At whichever time it might have been introduced, the new method of the Drāviḍi style in indicating the medial vowel *a* both short and long, had been a short lived one. This becomes evident from the earliest inscriptions recovered after these Brāhmī records and available in the Grantha, Tamil and Vaṭṭeḻuttu scripts which do not follow the innovation, but are written in the ordinary way. And even among the Brāhmī records also, those found at Pugaḻiyūr which may be considered the latest and assigned to a period coeval with that of the Arikamēḍu *graffiti* also follow this principle. As such it may be possibly concluded that (1) these records may be assigned ranging from the third century B.C. to the second century A.D., and (2) such of the records as follow the Drāviḍī style in indicating the medial vowel *a* both short and long are earlier, while those not following that principle are later.[7]

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7. Ahmad Hasan Dani examines the date of these inscriptions and says: "the inscription from Śittannavās'al is unique in South India in that it copies certain northern letters which are not known in Amaravati. The most remarkable is the form of *la* which occurs in the S'aka Kshatrapa records of Mathura. The forms of *na*, *pa* and *ya* are also remarkable. Hence this inscription cannot be dated earlier than the first half of the first century A.D.

"The other cave inscriptions are cruder in workmanship, but some of the forms are related to the Śittannavāsal inscriptions. The comparable letters are *va*, *la*, *ma*, *ṛa*, *ḷa*, *ṉa*, *ta*, *cha* and *ka*. *Ma* is of a new form in these inscriptions resembling a U with a cross-bar in the middle. This will be called hereafter Drāvidian *ma*. This form has been found in Sanchi. These inscriptions are not far removed in time from the S'ittannavāśal inscription, though

they are cruder in workmanship, and their date must fall in the first half of the first century A. D."

"Dani claims that his dating of these cave inscriptions receives confirmation from the evidence supplied by the excavated materials at Arikamēḍu and says: "There, some inscribed potsherds have been found in datable strata. Even if we do not rely on the evidence of the stratification, as dated by Wheeler, these inscriptions may also be dated on palaeographical grounds. They fall into two groups. The first which we call Arikamēḍu I has legends in Tamil, and the script, though crudely scratched on the pots, agrees with that seen in the caves of the Madura and Tinnevelli districts. In Arikamēḍu II only one potshered is illustrated, which reads *yakhamitrasya* and not *yakhamitrasa*, as is given in the published report.

"The importance of this inscription lies not only in the use of a northern language but also in the script which is quite different from that of the other potsherds. Obviously the difference is due to the persons who made the pots-the single piece of Arikamēḍu II was inscribed by a potter who knew some Sanskrit, if only very poorly and who probably came from the north, while the others were made and inscribed by the local southerners. This probably accounts for the marked difference in the scripts followed. The southerner follows the crude style of the cave inscriptions, while the northerner copies forms that can be traced from the records of the Mathura Kshatrapas (note especially the letters *kha*, *ma*, and *ya*). Here we get the southern scripts in the first century A.D.: dated both by the palaeography as well as by the other materials produced by the archaeologists. This evidence sets at rest all controversies regarding the age of the cave inscriptions. They cannot be placed earlier than the beginning of the Christian era." *Indian Palaeography*, (1963), pp. 72-74.

But in the light of our discussion of the formation and use of the medial vowel *a* both short and long in the different cave inscriptions in the Tamil country, it may not be possible to agree with Dani with regard to their date, though there cannot be any difficulty in fixing the date of the Arikamēḍu potsherds.

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE CAVE INSCRIPTIONS

Site	Date
Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi (Māṇguḷam)	3rd Century B.C.
Karuṉgāḷakkuḍi Kiḻavaḷavu Marugāḷtalai Koṉgarpuḷiyankuḷam Vikkiramaṉgalam	3rd to 2nd Century B.C.
Aḻagarmalai	2nd Century B.C.
Śittaṉṉavāśal	late 2nd Century B.C.
Tiruppaṟankuṉṟam Siddharmalai (Mēṭṭupaṭṭi) Muttupaṭṭi Variccīyūr (Kuṉṉattūr) Āṉaimalai	1st Century B.C.
Pugaḻiyūr Kuṉṉakkuḍi	2nd or 3rd Century B.C.
Māmaṇḍūr Araccalūr	Late 3rd or early 4th Century A.D.

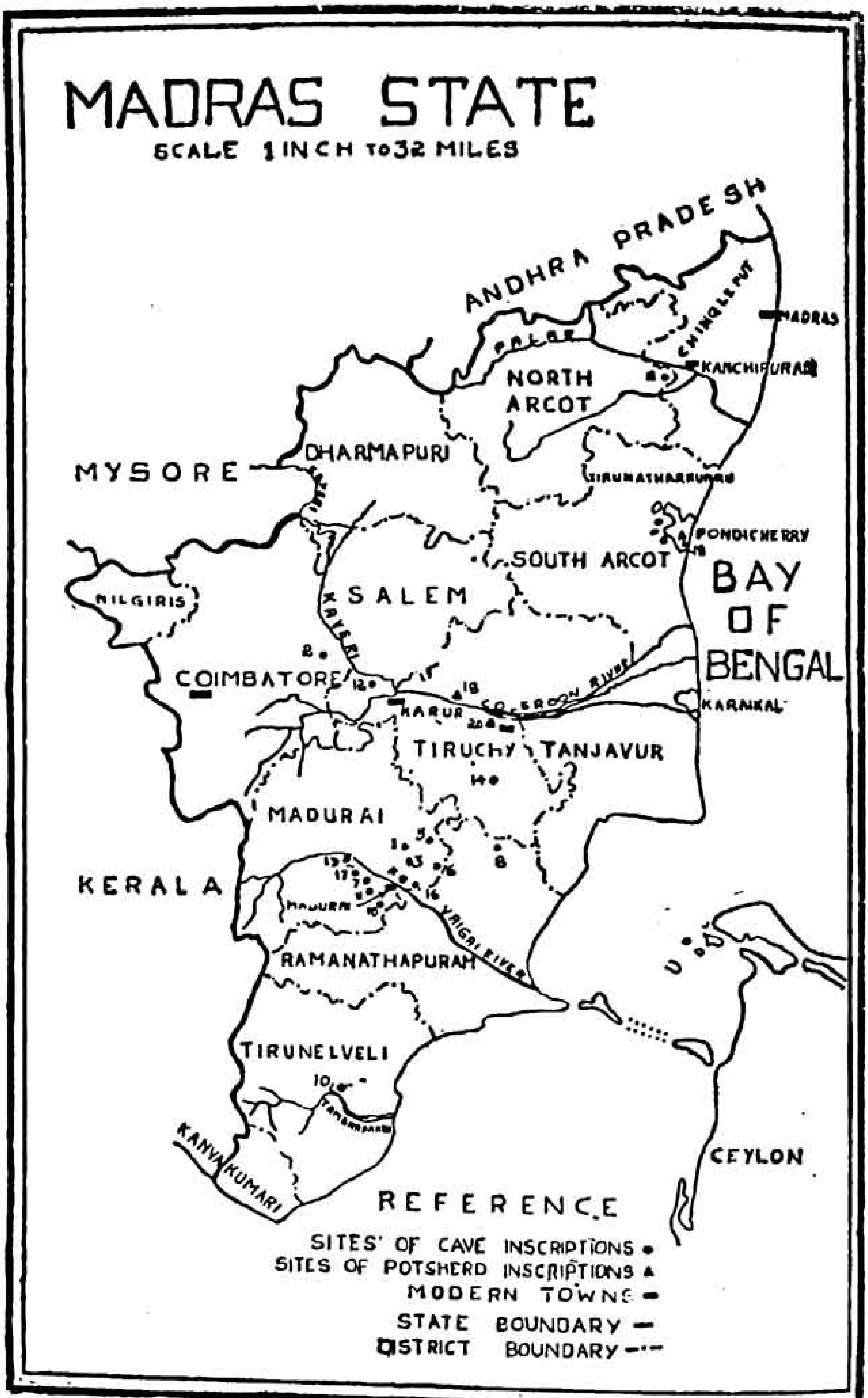


Fig. 13. Map of Madras State showing the sites with cavern and potsherd inscriptions.

ARIṬṬĀPAṬṬI (MĀNGUḶAM)

Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi is a village that is situated midway between Melur and the Alagarmalai hills in the Madurai District. Not far away from the village is Māngulam where there is a range of hills called Kaḻugumalai or Ūvāmalai. The ascent is through the rocky shopes of the hill, which are very steep. On the eastern slope of the hill there are five caverns with the usual beds and Brāhmī inscriptions. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says that "of the four caverns discovered in the Kaḻugumalai hill, three contain smoothly chiselled beds cut on the bottom rocks. In some, the beds are quite numerous and run in different directions. All the four bear Brāhmī inscriptions."[1] The long inscription in the lower-most cavern is not written on the brow of the overhanging boulder but on another which forms the backwall of its northern portion. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar says: "The inscription is engraved on the open face of a bare rock at an inaccessible height in bold and clear characters. In front of the rock is a spacious court-yard without any bed and without the least sheltering place as in the case of all other caverns."[2] The floor of the cavern is sandy and hence no beds are found in it. The southern part of the cavern extends to a depth of 49 feet 5 inches between two boulders that serve as walls. The entire length of the cavern which is in the shape of a curve is 58 feet and the height at the opening is roughly 11½ feet. There are as many as 31 beds both inside and outside on a protecting platform. One of the beds in front of the last cavern measures 7 feet 8 inches by 5 feet and is on a higher level than the others and occupies a central position.

The inscription[3] in the lowest cavern which is the longest so far discovered has been read by Krishna Sastri as follows:

Ka ṇi ya n [a] na ta si ri ya ku
a na dha ma ma ī ta na ṭi
ña ca ṭṭhi ya na sa l [a] ka

1. *Proceedings and Transactions of the Third All India Oriental Conference*, p. 276.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
3. 460 of 1906.

na i ḷa ña ca ṭi ka na
ta na tai ya ca ṭi ka na cē i
ya pa ḷi ya.

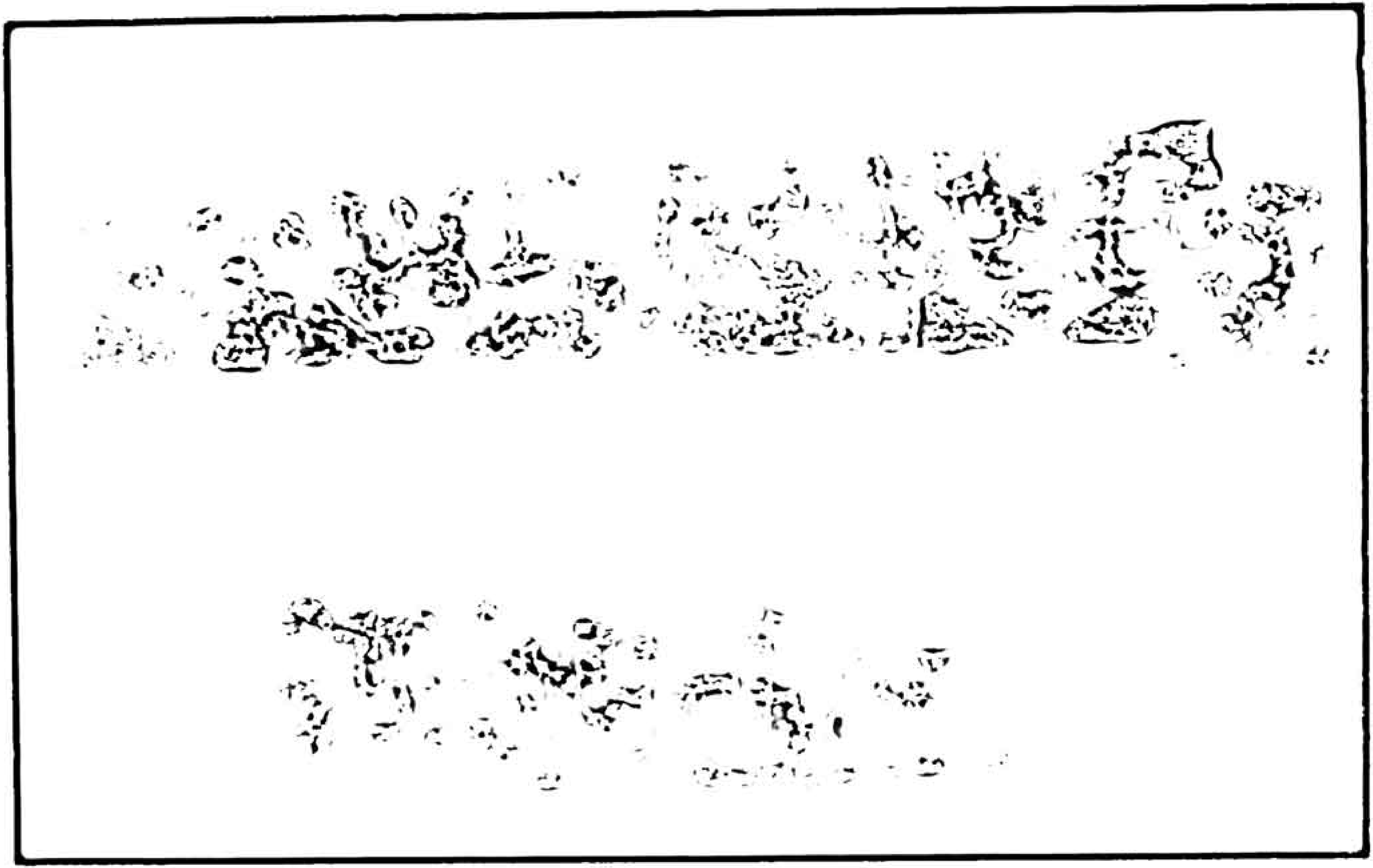
He has also noted that at the bottom of the second letter *ṇa* is found attached a vertical stroke like the medial *u* sign and that the length of the letters read by him as *na* (eg. the fourth one) is generally of the Bhaṭṭiprōlu type throughout.

He observes the occurrence of the *caṭṭhiyana*; once and perhaps, its variant, *Caṭikana* twice. He also thinks it possible that the letters *cē ī ya* at the end may stand for *caityani* and *paliya* for *palya* and that if so, these would be some at least of the Prākṛt words in the inscription. "The three possible words *siriyaka, siriyaku* and *yakasītikā* which occur in this record and in the epigraphs 2 and 5 below include in them the word *yaka* (*Yakṣa*) which is not uncommon in Buddhist names." He also notes that the word *Yakana* is also found in the third epigraph recovered from Alagarmalai.

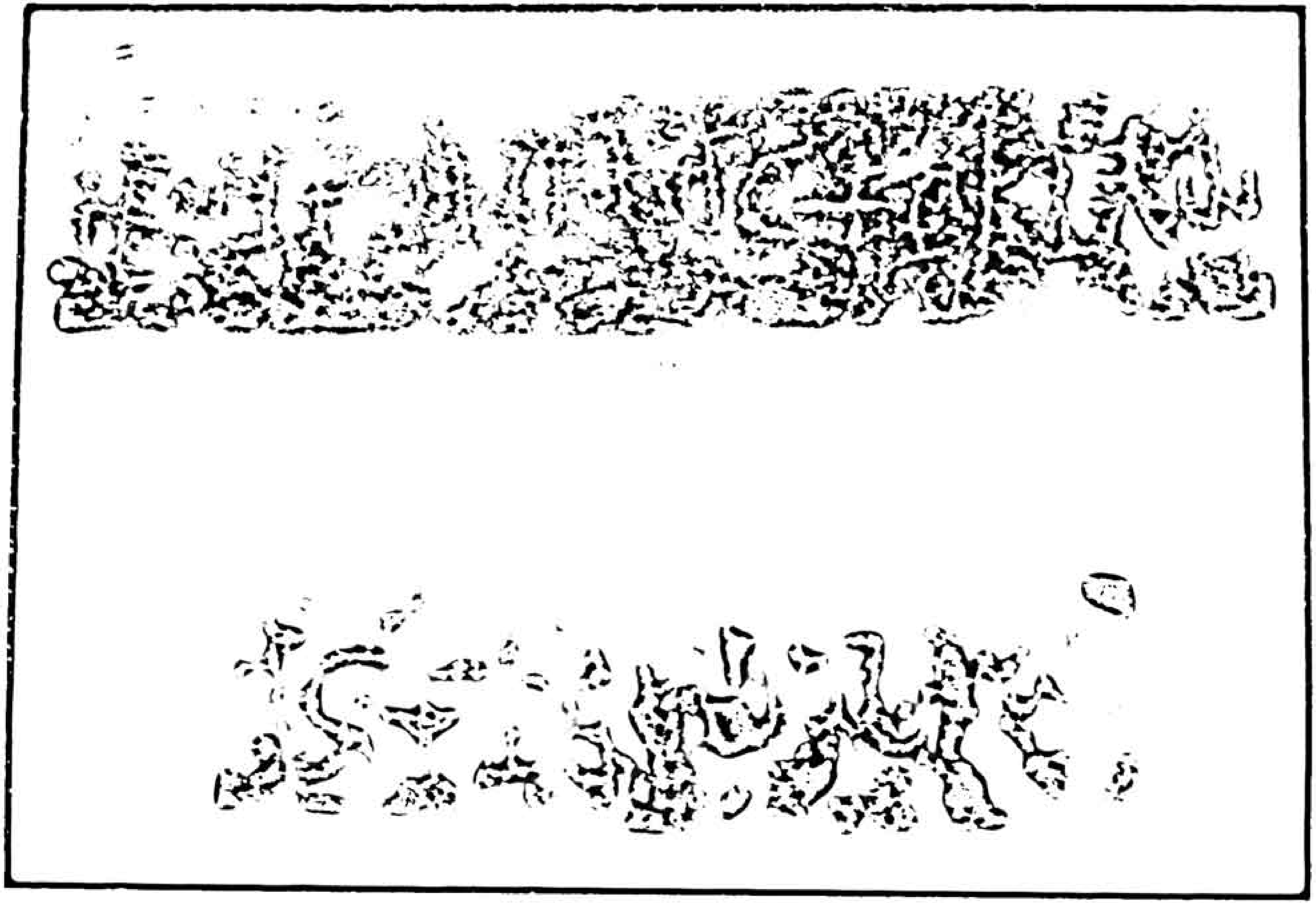
K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, who assigns basic values to the letters *na* etc. as in the rest, renders the record as follows:

Ka ṇi yaṉ Nata siri Yakuan dhamam ita
Naṭiñ Caṟiyaṉ Salakaṉ Iṭañ Caṭikaṉ tantaiy
Caṟikaṉ ceī ya paḷi y.

He notes that the opening words *Kaṇiyaṉ Natā Siri Yakuaṉ* occurs in a slightly altered form, *Karaṇira Nōla Siri Yakaru* in the next record, which is found in another cavern in the same hill and as such may be considered as representing the same person. In Kaṅiyan, the first word of the record *ka* takes the place of *kara* found in the second; and similarly *ya* takes the place of the final *ra*. He thinks that the word really intended here is *karaṇi* which originally meant a mixed caste of the *anuloma* variety. The next word found written respectively as *nata* and *nōla* in these two records, he thinks, are variants of the word *nātha*, 'a chief.' *Yakuaṉ* which occurs as *Yakaru* in the next record is the Sanskrit *Yakṣa* in its Prākṛt form *Yakkha* with the Tamil masculine suffix *aṉ*. [He takes this *aṉ* suffix as nothing but the third personal pronoun *avaṉ*. Similarly the suffix *ru* of the next record is considered as equivalent to the



Plate—1. Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi



Plate—2. Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi

honorific *ar* in Tamil or *ru* in Kannaḍa.] The occurrence of the words *Siri* and *natha* in the name is taken as indicating the one as a person of some importance. *Dhamam* is taken by him as a variant of *dharmma* with the Tamil neuter suffix *m* added, and the penultimate letter lengthened. Similarly the words *tantai, makaṉ* and *ita* are taken as standing for *tantai makaṉ* and *ida* (the last word being the equivalent of the modern Tamil word *iden,* third person neuter pronoun). "In the passage coming after *ita, Carikaṉ* and *Cariyaṉ* are proper names, one being a variant of the other thus exemplifying the common rule that *ya* takes the place of *ka*, passing through the form *a* invariably as in Prākṛt......*Neḍuñ* and *Iḷañ* prefixed to *Cariyaṉ* or *Carikaṉ* mean the "elder and the younger."

Ce i ya seems to be the Prakṛt form of *caitya* which adopts to itself, the other alternative form *ce ti ya* or *saiya.* And finally *paḷiy* is taken as the Tamil word *paḷi* meaning an excavation in stone set apart for the residence of monks.

The whole record is translated by him as follows: "This is the charity of the glorious chief S'rī-Yakṣa, a Karaṇi (by caste). This stone excavation for a relic chamber was made by *Carikaṉ,* the father of Iḷañ-Cārikaṉ, and the brother-in-law of Neḍuñ-Cāriyaṉ."[4]

Narayana Rao groups the words as follows:

Kaṇiyana nata siri-yaku ana dhamama
ita naṭiña Caṭṭhiyana sa'iakana Iḷana
caṭikana tana-taiya; Caṭikana Cē'iya
paḷiya

and restores them in Sanskrit as

Gaṇakanam natha (nam) S'rī-yakṣaṇam
dharmam; idha (Pali 'here') (itaḥ)
nartinam sarthavahakanam Sim-
haḷanam śrēṣṭhikanam
dana-deyam; śrēṣṭhikanam
caitya palika

4. See *Proceedings and Transactions of the Third All India Oriental Conference*, p. 290-291.

which he translates as

"the gift of the prosperous *yakṣas*, the accountants? the gift of the *Śrēṣṭhins* or chiefs of the wandering traders of Ceylon who have camped here; the 'Catiya Pālika' or relic monastery of (built by) the merchant chiefs."

He also thinks that it is possible that '*nala*' may be a scribal error for *nota*—Sanskrit *Snuṣa*=daughter-in-law, occurring in the next record.

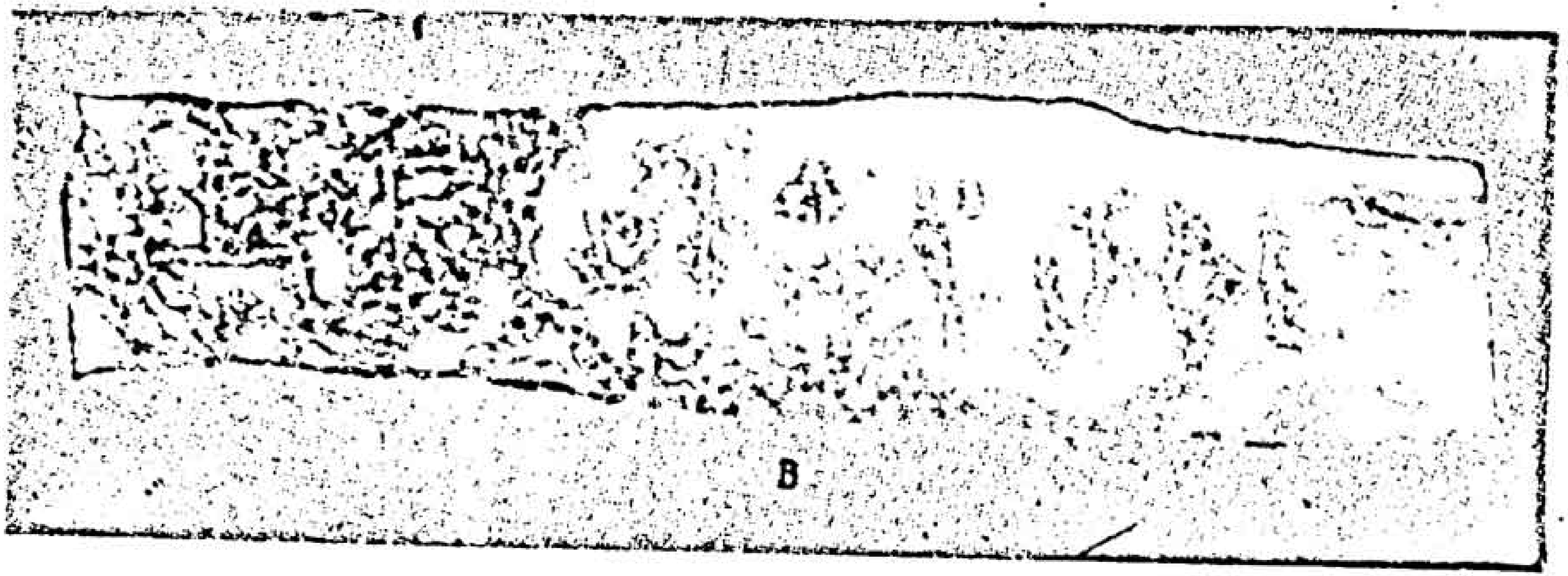
The other inscriptions found at the place have been read by Krishna Sastri as follows:

2. *Ka [sa] ṇi ra n [ō] ta si ṛi ya ka [ṟu]*
3. *C [ā] na ta ri ta na ko ṭu pi tō na*
4. *Ve ḷa a ḍai ni ka ma tō ra koṭi [o ra]*
5. *Ve ḷa [a] [ḍai] ya ni ka ma t [a] ko*
   [pō] ti ra [ya] ka si ti ka a [ri te] a
   sa ta na pi na ka ko ṭu pi tō na.[5]

He says that there seem to be three dots arranged like the Aśokan letter *i* before *ca* at the beginning of the third record, but it is highly doubtful if they have to be taken so; he also thinks that the last two letters of the fourth record, *a* and *ra*, (though given in his reading as *o* and *ra*), one engraved so close to the other that they may be read also as a broadly formed *la*. He further notes that the expression *veḷa aḍaiyanikāma* occurs in both the fourth and fifth records only with an extra syllable *ya* comparable with the superfluous consonant *y* which occurs frequently in early Tamil inscriptions after syllables ending in medial *ai*. Likewise *koṭupitōna* occurs in both the third and fifth records and has to be connected with the root *ekoṭu*. *Nōtasiriyaka* occurring in the second inscription is seen in the first record as *natasiriyaku*.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that all the above four form one single inscription in two parts relating probably to two different compartments in the cavern in which these are found.

5. 461 to 65 of 1906.



Plate—3.

Arițțāpuțți

Plate—4. Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi

The text as read by him runs as follows:

2 & 3. *Karaṇira nōla Siri Yakaru*
Cānatārilāṉ Koṭupitōṉ

4. *Veḷ-aḍai nikāmatōr Koṭiōr*

5. *Veḷ-aḍaiy nikāmatāko potir*
yakāsiti kaaritava Sātaṉ
Piṇāka koṭupitōn.

He takes the first two (i.e. the first three according to Krishna Sastri) go together forming one inscription. *Veḷ-aḍai* is treated as the name of the place Veḷḷaḍai, wherein a single *ḷa* is used in the place of the double *ḷḷa* required, which phenomenon has been found by him in these records. The word *nikāma* may either be connected with *nigama* (*naigama*) merchants which occurs in Prākṛt inscriptions as *nekhama* [6] and *negama* [7] or treated as a place ending like *sthāna*, *nagara* or *pura* being connected with *Veḷḷaḍai*. He also notes that in Pāli the word *nekkama* occurs in the sense of 'renunciation from the world' and is one of *Parami's* supreme virtues, and that though this sense is not possible in this epigraph yet in the sense 'one coming from' a place, it will well suit, *at* being only a euphonic particle. The last word *koṭiōr* is taken to stand for *koṭṭuvittaṉ* without the addition of the euphonic particles.

The record is translated by him as follows:

"Caused to be excavated by the glorious chief yakaṉ Cāṇatāritaṉ, a *Karaṇi* (by caste). The citizens (or merchants) of Veḷḷaḍai cut it."

In the last record the word *potir* probably means a daughter (*putri*); *nikāmatāko* has to be regarded as a dative singular and means 'of a citizen.' *Yakāsiti* is the proper name of the individual and *kaarita* means 'caused to be made' *Piṇāka* should be considered as the variant of Piṇakkan with the double *ka*.

The meaning of this record is: "Yakṣāsiti, the daughter of a citizen of Veḷḷaḍai caused to be made (this cave) and Śattaṉ Piṇakkaṉ had it cut."

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6. *E. I.* Vol. VIII. p. 90.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. II. pp. 328-29.

Narayana Rao reads the inscriptions as follows:

2. *Karaṇira n(ō) ta siri-yaka-(ra)*

3. *Cana tarilana koṭupilōṇa*

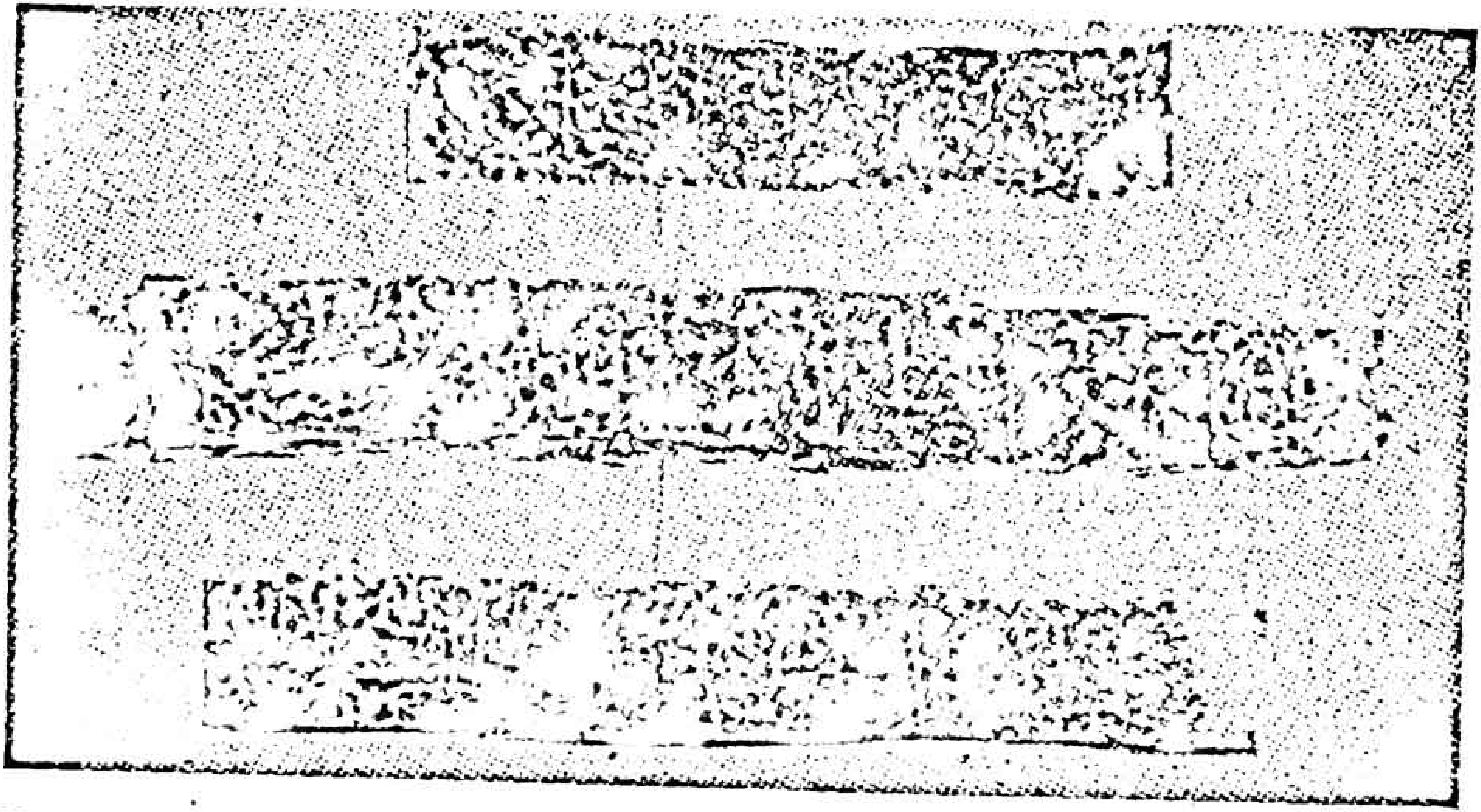
4 & 5. *Veḷa-aṭṭaya nikamalakō pō tira*
(ya) kasiti Ka 'a (rilē) 'a
satana piṇaka koṭupilōṇa

He adds the following notes to explain his heading:

"*Karaṇira* (*Karaṇa* and—*ira*) where *Karaṇa* has in Prākṛt the meanings '*kṛti, kriya, vidhana*' (*Thaṇangasulta*, 3.1; *Surasundaricariya* 4.24); or a 'court of justice' (*Upadēśapada*, 117); or 'one who does' (*Kumarapalacarita*); any of these meanings—*ira* is a *matup* suffix meaning 'having'—*nōla* is from Skt. '*snuṣa*'; son's wife; *noha* in Mahārāṣṭri Prākṛt—*nola* as Mr. Krishna Sastri suggests, may be a variant of nata, Skt. *natha*. *Siriyaka*, Skt. *Śri-yakṣa—racina*, Skt. *rajnam*, of kings, *tarilana* Skt. *darilanam* or *daridranam*, 'of those which have been excavated,' 'of the poor'—*koṭupilōna*, Skt. *kuṭṭapilanam*, 'of those which have been cut'—*veḷa* may be connected with the prākṛt *veḷḷa* Skt. *vilasa* pleasure; or *vē'alaa* Skt. *vidaraka*, an excavator *Sutrakṛtango—niryukti*, 36), or Skt. *vaikalika* 'belonging to the after-noon'; (*Daśavaikalikaniryukti*, 1.5 : 17:—*attaya*, Skt. *arthaya*, for the purpose of—*nikamata*, a collection of *Naigamas* or congregations of merchant guilds—*kō*, Skt. *kṛtē*, 'for the purpose of'—*ta* is a suffix giving the meaning of 'a collection or congregation'—*pōtira*, Skt. *putri*, or *pautri*; 'a daughter or grand-daughter.' *Yakasiti* may be a proper name or a common name from Skt. *Yakṣa-stri*, a *yakṣiṇi* or a merchant woman (of *Yakṣa* who is always referred to as a merchant. *Ka'arilē'a*, Skt. *Karilavati*. *Satanam* Skt. *sarthavahanam* for 'wandering merchants'—(*Piṇaka*, Skt. *Vinayaka*, (*Vinayak* a 'Yakṣa,' Yakṣiṇi, (*Paumacaria*, 35.22); *Koṭupilōna* Skt.) *kuṭṭapitanam* (I do not accept the sonant 'd' in these records) and so, as elsewhere I have read it as 'ṭṭa')."

The meaning of the inscription according to Narayana Rao is:

"The daughter-in-law of the king (honorific plural used) who had got this cave excavated and cut, the daughter of Yakṣastri



Plate—5.

Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi

(proper name) a 'Piṇāka' or 'Yakṣiṇī' had this done for all the congregations of wandering merchants as an after-noon (resting place)."

The actual reading of the first inscription is as follows:

Ka ṇi ya nā na ta si ri ya ku a ṇa
dha (or *e*) *ma mx i ta ne ṭi ña ca ḻi ya ṉa*
sa la ka ṉa i ṭa ña ca ṭi ka ṉa ta ṉa tai
ca ṭi ka ṉa ce i [*ta* or *ya*] *ḷi ya.*

In this inscription the thirteenth letter which has been read as *dha* may also be read as the vowel *E*. The third letter from the end has been read as *ya* by all scholars so far. A perusal of the photograph would show that the letter is damaged and appears to have been corrected or over-written. The form of *ta* is also seen. Evidently it is *ta* having been corrected from *ya* chiselled originally.

In the Drāviḍi restoration the inscription would be as follows:

Kaṇiy nanta siriy ku a=ṉ emam ita
deṭiñ Caḻiyaṉ salakaṉ iḷañ-Caṭikaṉ tantaiy
Caṭikaṉ ceita paḷiy

The letter *ya* occurs four times in this record; and in all the four places it follows the medial vowel *i*, and as such it has to be treated as the superfluous suffix, a feature very common in early Tamil inscriptions. We have discussed earlier about the word *paḷiy*. This will mean bed. *Ceita* is evidently the adjectival particle of which the correct form is *ceyta*, meaning 'made by.' Caṭikaṉ is evidently the name of a person, having a son named Iḷañ Caṭikaṉ i.e., Caṭikaṉ the junior. Very likely the word is related to the Sanskrit form *Jaṭila*. Subrahmanya Ayyar has pointed out that the word *śakalaṉ* means a brother-in-law and it is the same as *ślakaṉ* or *śakalai* now used. The use of the Sanskrit letter *sa* clearly shows that this is not a Tamil word *Neṭiñ-caḻiyaṉ* like *Iḷañ-caṭikaṉ* would mean *caḻiyaṉ*, the senior, the correct form of the word being *Neṭum*. But we have also the use of the medial *i* in the word *Neṭiyōṉ*, meaning a tall person or a superior person. That Caḻiyaṉ is the name of a person is clear from the suffix of the third person masculine *aṉ*. It may

be that it is connected with *Caṭikaṉ* or *Caḷiyaṉ* in which case it would mean a Pāṇḍya. It is well known that the name Neṭuñ Ceḻiyar is a common one among the Pāṇḍyas.

Then the latter portion of the record would mean: "This is the *paḷi* (or *paḷḷi*) made by Caṭikaṉ, father of Iḷañcaṭikaṉ (i.e. Caṭikaṉ the Junior) brother-in-law of Neṭiñ-caḷiyaṉ (i.e. Caḷiyaṉ the senior).

The earlier portion of the record is not so easy. The first word *Kaṇiy* means a fortune teller (or astrologer) or one who practises the art of prognostication. We know that the Ājīvikas were adepts in that art and that they were practising it. *Nanta* is evidently the Sanskrit word Nanda meaning one of the treasures of Kubēra and also the name of his attendants. *Siriy* very often occurs as the form of Śrī *Kuaṉ* should be the name of a person like *Kuvaṉ*, *Kuyaṉ*, or *Kubaṉ*. Very likely it is *Kubēra*.

It is possible that *Kuaṉ* (is the form of) represents *Kuyaṉ* or *Kuhaṉ*, i.e, *Guhaṉ* or *Guhyaka*. We know that *guhyas* or *guhyakas* are connected with the Yakṣas who figure as the vehicles or bearers (*vāhanas*) of the Yakṣa gods like Kubēra.

It is also possible to read the whole expression Siri Yakuan taking it as Śrī Yakṣa. But even then the difficulty is there as the form *Yakuaṉ* for Yakṣa is no where found.

The next word *ēmam* means gold (*hema*) or protection (from *kṣema*). It is used in the latter sense in the *Puranāṉūṟu*.

It is taken as *dhamam* it will become *dharma*. But it denoted the law or right mode of conduct and is not known to have been used in the sense of a charity or gift in those days. The word evidently acquired the latter meaning, i.e., gift or charity only in later days when *dana* came to be considered more meritorious than sacrifice (*yajña*) and became part of one's mode of life.

If the reading *Dhamma*, is adopted, it would signify *Dharma*, one of the God's, prominently mentioned in early inscriptions.[8]

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8. Cf. Nanaghat Inscriptions of Naganika (See Dr. D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 186).

It is the word *ita* which baffles the construction and interpretation of the whole record. As it is, the word does not convey any meaning. It should be *itu* (meaning this) or *inta* meaning 'given by.' But this letter is an adjectival participle requiring a noun immediately following it. In this record *pāḷiy* or bed is the only noun, and it comes at the end, Such a construction is very unusual. The correct form of the word would be the infinite verb *intu* (having given). But the engraver intended only *ta*, as this is clear from the single *ā* long symbol of a horizontal line at the top added to the letter on the right. If the word *itu* is also taken as forming part of a personal name, then there will not be much difficulty in the interpretation of the record as the earlier portion will be adjectival qualifying the name Neṭuñcaḻiyan. This has possibly some connection with the words *itatuve* and *itatūvin* occurring in the second and third labels at Kongarpuḷiyankuḷam.

We have seen earlier that *ita* and *ida* occur in the Prākṛt inscriptions of Western India as standing for Indra. The earlier portion thus probably means : "With the gold given by Nanda Siri Kubēra or Nanda Śrī Yakṣa the (astrologer) fortune-teller."

B. The actual reading of the inscription is :—

Ka ra ṇi ra nā ta si ri ya ka [ru]

The horizontal stroke to the left of the fifth letter, read as *no* by Krishna Sastri is not clear. Probably we have to take it as only *nā* as Subrahmanya Ayyar has done. The last letter read as *ru* may also be taken as the vowel *u*. In the penultimate sign *ka* the lower portion is damaged. Hence it cannot be definitely said whether it is *ka* or *ku*[9].

C. The actual reading of the next label is :

C [ā] na ta ri ta ṉa ko ṭu pi to ṉa

Krishna Sastri says that the three dots arranged in the form of a triangle like the Aśokan letter *i* are found at the beginning of the record, but at the same time says that "it is highly doubtful if they have to be taken so."

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9. Cf. D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, p. 186.

This record may be restored in Drāviḍi as:

Cantaritaṉ koṭupitōṉ

This label gives the name of the person who gave away or caused to be made the cavern or bed. It is to be translated as:

Cantaritaṉ is the person who gave this.

Cantaritaṉ is evidently a compound made up of the two words *Cantaṉ* and *aritaṉ* both of which names occur in Brāhmī records.

It is also to be noted that in common with the other Brāhmī inscriptions found in this part of the country the word *koṭupitōṉ* stands for *koṭuppittōṉ* without doubling the consonants *p* and *t* as required.

D. The reading of the fourth label is:

Ve ḷa a ṭai ni kā mā to ra ko ṭ [i] [o ra]

The label is to be restored in Drāviḍi as:

Veḷ-aṭai nikamatōr kotiōr.

As pointed out by Subrahmanya Ayyar *Veḷ-aṭai* evidently stands for *Veḷḷaḍai*, the name of a place; and *nikamatōr* for those belonging to *nikama* or *nigama*, the trading corporation. The last word *koṭiōr* is taken as standing for *koṭupitaṉ* or *koṭṭuvittaṉ*. It should be noted that it is not found used elsewhere in this form. As such it is not possible to take this word in that sense.

The word *Kōṭiyar* is found largely used in early classical Tamil literature. Commentators explain the word as meaning *Viṟaliyar*, the women-folk of the *Paṇar* class, as they move their body in zig-zag manner when they dance. Probably *Kōṭiyar* is the feminine form of *Kōṭar* about whom also mention is made in classical Tamil literature. These *Kōṭar* are probably to be taken as the *Nāgas* (possibily derived from *Koṭa* or *Karkōṭa*). Thus *Kōṭiyar* would mean the women folk of the Nāga people. Both the words *Kōṭiyar* and *Kōṭiyōr* are variant forms of the same word, and mean the same.

Thus the label may be translated as :

The Kōṭiyōr (Nāga women) belonging to the *nikama* (i.e. *nigama* or *naigama*, the merchant corporation) of Veḷḷaḍai.

E. In Drāviḍi the fifth inscription will be restored as :

Veḷaṭaiy nikamatakopolir
yaka sitikaaritea catan̲
piṇaka koṭupitōn̲.

The last word *koṭupitōn̲* would mean " person who caused it to be given ". Very likely this record contains more of the Prākṛt element and has to be translated as follows, following Subrahmanya Ayyar:

" Yaka Siti, the daughter, of a citizen of Veḷḷaḍai caused to be made (this cave) and Cattan̲ Piṇakkan̲ had it cut."

KARUNGAḶAKKUḌI

This village lies about eight miles to the north of Melur in the Madurai District on the road to Tiruchirapalli. The caverns on the hills near the place and the beds chiselled therein are of special interest, One of the caverns which contains a Brāhmī inscription measures 33 feet east to west as well as north to south, opening both on the southern and northern sides.

In another cavern higher up on the same hill there is a Vaṭṭeluttu inscription in Tamil verse cut on one in a row of rocky beds. That record states that a certain chief called Paḷḷidaraiyaṉ rendered service in different capacities to his master the Pāṇḍya king referred to in the verse by the terms *Vaḻudi* or *Mīṉavaṉ*, by building a bright *vimāna*, stopping the sea from encroaching and by protecting sacrifices at Tiruppodiyil by his scholarship, asceticism and saintliness (?).[1] Apparently it contains a reference to the sage Agastya whose intimate connection with the Pāṇḍyas, the Podiyil hill and Tamil literature is so well-known. The age to which Paḷḷidaraiyaṉ or his master, the Pāṇḍya king, belonged, cannot be determined at present; but palaeographically the Vaṭṭeluttu characters in which the epigraph is incised may be assigned to the ninth century A.D. One interesting inference the inscription leads to is that the beds in the natural caverns were used not only by the Jaina saints, but also by laymen about twelve hundred years ago, as is done by mendicants of the present day.

Further on a rock, opposite to the cavern containing the Brāhmī record on the west is engraved a Jaina image with a Vaṭṭeluttu inscription below it, which invokes the teacher Ajjaṇandi.[2]

The short Brāhmī inscription consisting of eleven characters[3] has been read by Krishna Sastri as follows :—

[E] ṭhu ya r [u] ra a ri ṭi na pa ḷi

1. No 563 of 1911.
2. No. 562 of 1911.
3. No. 561 of 1911.

Plate—6. **Karuṅgaḷakkoḍi**

He considers that the first five syllables which end in *ura* may constitute the name of a village and also draws attention to the word *pali* occurring in other records also (Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi and Kīḻavaḷavu).[4] He also thinks that between the eighth and ninth letters of the record, *ti* and *na* the impression shows a symbol, somewhat like that of the mark of interrogation (?). He is not sure whether it is to be read as Aśokan *kha* or simply treated as a clumsy slit on the stone.

Subrahmanya Ayyar, treating the *na* as a basic consonant reads the inscription as consisting of three words.

Eṭhuyarūra Aritin Paḷi

He also supplies the masculine suffix ṉ to the first word, the modern equivalent of which will be Eṭṭiyūraṉ and translates it as

"This is the cave of Āriti of Eṭṭiyūr."

Narayana Rao follows Krishna Sastri in his reading of the inscription and restores the epigraph in Sanskrit as follows:

Eṭhuyarara Hāritānām Pali = (Ki ?).

The actual reading of the record is:

E ṭhu ya u ra Ari ti da pa ḷi.

In accordance with the general principle followed in reading the Drāviḍi script found in the Bhaṭṭiprōlu inscription, the present inscription may be read as follows:

[E] ṭhuyūr Aritin paḷi.

The words *aritin* and *paḷi* have been discussed earlier. The only other word in the present inscription is Eṭhuyūr, The suffix *ūr* added to it points to the fact that it is the name of the village. The record will therefore mean

"The bed of Aritiṉ (i.e. Hārita) of Eṭhuyūr (or Eṭṭiyūr).

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4. See *Proceedings of the First All-India Oriental Conference*, pp. 208 and 217.

KILAVALAVU

On the low range of hills with huge boulders between Kiḻūr and Kiḷavaḷavu, nearly seven miles from Melur on the road to Tirupattur are found some caverns containing the usual beds and inscriptions. Near one of these caverns there are cut in the rock numerous Jaina figures with Vaṭṭeḻuttu inscriptions below them.[1] The Brāhmī inscription[2] discovered as early as 1903 (and it was the first to be discovered in the Tamil country) is about fifteen feet from the ground level of the cavern. Many letters are written upside down and are boldly cut. Evidently the engraver had better convenience to work from the upper part of the cave than from the front.

According to Parker, there is an old Brāhmī inscription written upside down on one of the Tēvāṇḍāṇ Puliyangulam hills in Ceylon. He refers to it as the first instance of what is known there as the *Paerali Basā*. In this system is required an interchange or transformation of letters in written or spoken words; and in interpretation, the letters have to be read from right to left.[3] Krishna Sastri was doubtful if the Kiḷavaḷavu Brāhmī inscription was of this variety. Probably he felt it was not.

His transcription of the record was as under

u pā [c] ā a pō ta ṇe ṭu la vō
chō ko ṭu pā ḷi ɪ

Among the letters in the inscription, the sixth and the twelfth *te* and *ko* are in the normal correct position with reference to the reader from the ground, while the others are upside down.

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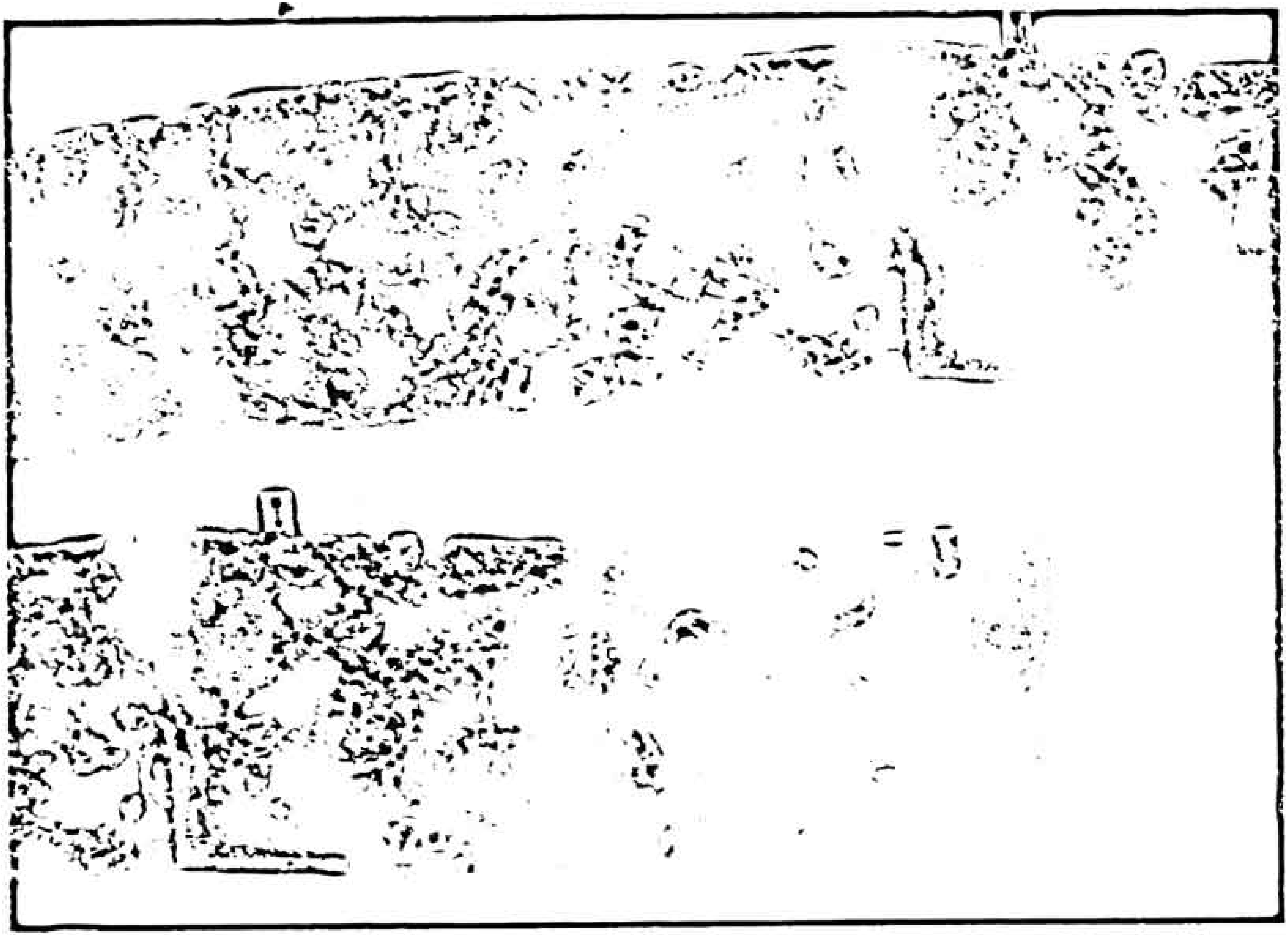
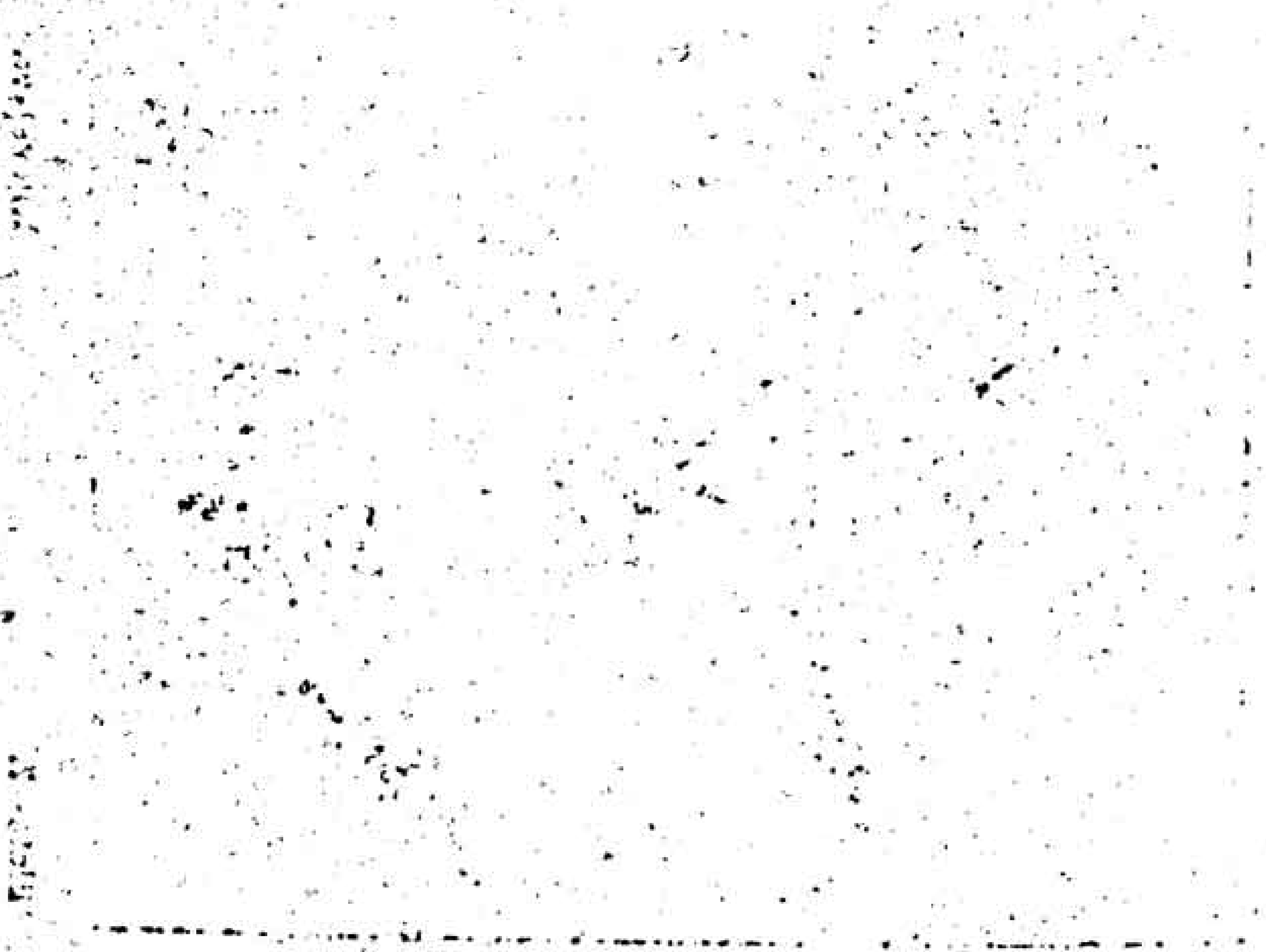
1. The place appears to have been a strong centre of Jaina influence like Āṉaimalai. The figures of the naked Jaina Tirthankaras etc. are interpreted by the local people as 'school children', and the whole spot is connected by them with a school that is supposed to have once existed here. Evidently the word *paḷḷi* which denotes a Jaina Temple also meaning a school is responsible for this belief of the people.

2. No. 135 of 1903.

3. *Ancient Ceylon*, pp. 429-30.



Plate—7. Kiḷavaḷavu



He also notes that the word *Ūpacaa* at the beginning seems to suggest the Prākṛt forms of *upadhyaya* and *vachō* are like-wise synonymous. The root *koṭu* has occurred elsewhere. He also compares the word *paḷi i* with the word *paḷiya* occurring in the record *A* at Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi.

Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the first word *upā-cā-a* may be regarded as the Tamil form of *upāsaka* through Prākṛt, as found largely in Ceylon inscriptions[4]. He reads the record as follows :

upā-cā-a pōta Neṭula Vōccō
koṭu paḷi ī.

According to him the second word *pōta* is no doubt the equivalent of *putra*. *Neṭula vōccō* is the name of a person, the second part of which is the Prākṛt form of *vasta* as may be seen from the same form of *vaccō* standing for *vasta* in the Bhaṭṭiprolu Casket inscriptions[5]. *I* at the end of the record is treated by him as the pronoun ' this '. " If the use of the word at the end of a sentence is objectionable and unlikely, it may form part of *paḷi*. This inscription is the second one which uses the word *paḷi* in the sense of a 'Cave'." Subrahmanya Ayyar translates the record as follows :

" This is the cave cut by Neṭula Vōccan the son of a lay devotee ".

Narayana Rao reads the record as follows :

upacā'a pōtā naṭṭalā vocco koṭu pāli'ī

restores it as :

upādhyāya-putraḥ naṭya kar o pādhyāyaḥ
kuṭṭāpitā pālikā (ki o)

and translates it as

" the monastery that the instructor of the dancers, the son of the teacher, got cut ".

4. Parker : *The Ancient Inscriptions of Ceylon,* Nos. 13, 37 and 447.

5. *Ep. Ind.,* II. p. 329.

The reading of the inscription is as follows:

u pā ca a po ta ṇe ṭu ḷā vo co ko ṭu pā ḷi i

There seems to be some space between the second and third letters, i.e., *pā* and *cā*. It is also to be noted that these two have each two *ā* long symbols added to their right. As pointed out earlier the sixth letter *ta* and twelfth letter *ko* are in correct position with reference to the reader from the ground, though the other letters are upside down. It is also possible to take the twelfth letter as *ku* taking it also as written upside down like the rest, as the horizontal stroke to take left at the bottom is not quite clear. The ninth letter read here as *ḷā* has been read by Krishna Sastri as *lā*. It is also possible to read it *ḷi*.

The *ā* symbol added to the ninth letter also looks like that of the medial vowel *i*: The eleventh letter has been read as *chho* by Krishna Sastri, and as *cco* by Subrahmanya Ayyar. The loops at the bottom which should be discernible both to the left and the right are not clear. On the other hand it appears more like a horizontal line, thus making it look like *na*.

The reading of the inscription as restored in Drāviḍi will be:

Upāca apote ṇeṭuḷa voco koṭu paḷi i.

Upāca is derived from the Sanskrit word *Upāsaka* and is possibly connected with the Tamil word *Uvaccan*. The last two words *koṭu paḷi* would mean the *paḷḷi* or bed given by (i.e: *koṭutta-paḷḷi* in modern form). The middle three words should form the name of a person. *Apote* may possibly be equated with *aputran* which name with the initial vowel lengthened as *āputtiran* was borne by one of the characters appearing in the Tamil epic the *Maṇimēkalai*.[6]

Ṇeṭuḷa should mean something like *Neṭuveḷ* (indicating god Muruga) or Neṭiyōn (indicating Lord Viṣṇu). Literally the word

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6. cf. canto 24. *Āputtiran nāḍu aḍainta kātai*; canto. 25. *Āputtiranōḍu Maṇipallavam aḍainta katai. Āputtira nāḍu*, the land of Āputra figures as one of the countries (an island) to which Maṇimēkalai the heroine of the poem is said to have flown by air from the Cōḷa capital kāvērippūmpaṭṭinam. Canto. 24. 1 169 mentions that Nāgapura was the capital of that island.

means a tall person or a person of great height (thus probably meaning the God having his temple on the top of a hill). *Voco* is the Prākṛt form of the word *Vatsa*. It is also to be noted that the word *ṇeṭuḷa* commences with the lingual *ṇa* which is not one of the initial letters in Tamil, i.e., the letters with which a Tamil word commences. But in Prākṛt the dental *na* becomes lingual and we have many words commencing with the lingual *ṇa*. This clearly shows the influence of Prākṛt in this record.

The entire record may be translated as follows:

"The bed given by (endowed or made by) the *upāsaka* (lay disciple) Āputtiraṉ (Āputran) Neḍuvēḷ vatsa (i.e. son of Neḍuvēḷ)."

This is a small village in the Tirunelveli District about ten miles North-East of Palayamkottai, a part of the town Tirunelveli and on the southern side of the River Tamraparṇi. A broad cavern has been formed by two huge boulders one over-hanging the other on the eastern side of the low hill locally known as Pūvil-uḍai-yār malai near the village.[1] The hill has now a number of shrines consecrated to village deities. The rocky floor thus formed on the bottom rock contains a number of beds chiseled at convenient places in four different sections.[2] The cavern runs to a length of 52 feet north to south and is 8 feet deep. A water drain (*katarh*) is cut on the edge of the overhanging boulder to lead off the rain water dripping from above. The cavern does not contain any sculpture as is found in some other caves; nor is there any water spring or water sources in the rocky hollows adjoining it. However, on some of the beds a few letters and diagrams of recent date are found incised. The figure of a lion found on some of the old Pallava coins and copper plates may be specially mentioned.

An inscription in Brāhmī characters is found incised on the brow of the boulder a little below the water-drain. The letters which are clear and well preserved range from one foot to fifteen inches in height. The inscription was first noticed by Mr. L. A. Cammiade, the Revenue Divisional Officer in the District in the year 1906 and brought to the notice of the Archaeological Department through Mr. D. T. Chadwick I.C.S., Settlement Officer of the District. This was examined and copied by the officers of the Epigraphy Department and its importance was recognised and noticed by V. Venkayya in his Epigraphy Report for the year 1906–7.[3]

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1. This name would mean "the hill of Pūvil-Uḍaiyār". The term *Pūvil-Uḍaiyar* represents a god seated on a flower evidently a lotus, of *malar micai.y.ekinān* occuring in the *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.

2. It is said that seven beds are found cut in it (*M.E.R.*, 1907, part II para I.) The beds were obviously meant for leaning or lying down.

3. Registered as No. 407 of 1906.

Plate—8 Marugaḷtalai

This short Brāhmī record of seventeen letters was read by H. Krishna Sastri as follows:

Vē ṇa kō si pa na ku ṭu pi ta k [a] [ḷa] kā ña ca ṇa na

He did not group the letters into words; nor did he try to translate or interpret the record. However, he drew the attention of scholars that the word *kōsipana* might be compared with the Sanskrit word *kāśyapanam* and the word *kuṭupita* with the Tamil word *Koṭṭuvittan* meaning caused to be cut (cf. also Childers: *koṭṭēti*. He also added in a footnote: "The syllable *kō* (in the word *Kōsipana*) has been read directly from the stone.[4] In the impression however there is a clear resemblance to *ki*."

The sixth letter in the inscription is read by Krishna Sastri as *na*. But K. V. Subramanya Ayyar reads it as *ṉa* which letter is peculiar to the Tamil language; and treating the second, sixth, fourteenth and seventeenth letters (*ṇa ṉa, ṇa, ña* and *ma*) as basic consonants he reads the record as:

Vēṅ Kōsipan Kuṭupita Kaḷa-Kāñcaṇam

and translates it as "auspicious (or stone) monastery was caused to be cut by Kāśyapa of the Vēṉ country (or the Vēḷir chief Kāśyapa). Vēṉ is taken as the name of a territorial division now represented by the (former) Travancore State, though he concedes that "it is not precluded that *Vēṇ* may stand for *vēḷ*, a 'chief'." *Kōsipaṉ* is the proper name of a person equivalent to Kassapa in Pāli, Kāśyapa in Sanskrit and Kāśipan in Tamil. He takes the word *kuṭupita* as the verb with the final n omitted (*kuṭupitaṉ*), with the root *koṭu* or *kuṭu* 'to cut' and *p* the causal particle. "Its modern form is *koṭṭuvittan* and means 'caused to be cut'" *Kaḷakāñcanam* is taken by Subrahmanya Ayyar as a compound of two words *kāḷa* and *kāñcanam*. The first word is derived from the Sanśkrit word *kalya* also having the alternate form *kalya* meaning auspicious, or alternately taken as connected with the Tamil word *kal* (Singalese *gala*), meaning a hill or stone. The other word *kāñcaṇam*, though generally it means gold or a variety of tree, has been taken to refer to the

4. *Proceedings of the First All India Oriental Conference*, 1920, p. 333.

monument itself, an abode, monastery or temple, since it comes after the verb *koṭṭuviṭṭāṉ*. In support of this K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar cites the remarks of Monier Williams that Hemādri uses this word in his *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* to denote a particular form of building. He also adds in a foot-note that according to Monier Williams *Kāla* and *Kāñcaṇa* are the names of future Buddhas and that "it is very doubtful if our inscription, early as it is, could have any reference to these."[5]

C. Narayana Rao[6] reads and interprets this short record in two different ways treating the third letter either as *kō* or as *kī*. Treating the letter as *kō* he reads the inscription as Prākṛt.

Vēṇa Kosipāna kuṭupita kaḷakañcanam

The word *Vēṇa* is restored by him as *vaiśyānām* (*Vaiśya* becoming *Ve* in the following manner: Vēssa = Vēyya = Vēya = Vē; and the genetive plural suffix *na*, the Prākṛt form of the Sanskrit *nām*: Kōsipāna is Kāśyapānām ; *kuṭupita* is *kūṭṭāpita* 'caused to be cut,' and Kālakāñcanam, 'a particular form of building.' He adds: "*kuṭāpita* is a past passive casual participle agreeing with *kālakāñcanam*; the difference in the gender between the adjective and the noun need not give trouble. The agreement between the adjective and the noun is not strictly followed in the Prākrits." Thus it will mean: "the *kālakāñcanam* or building caused to be cut for (or by or belonging to) the people, the Kāśyapas."

Alternately treating the letter as *ki* he reads it as *Vēṇāki sipāna kuṭupita kālakāñcanam* meaning "the *kālakāñcanam* or building caused to be cut or built by a woman follower of the Buddhist *Vinaya* doctrine (or a woman whose personal name was *Vēṇāki* or *Vaināyaki*), restoring the word *Vēṇāki* as *Vaināyki* or Sanskrit (i.e.) a woman follower of the *Vinaya* or the Buddhist doctrine and *śilpāna* as *śilpānam* belonging to the sect of the *śilpins* or architects or artisans. He says that the second interpretation seems more probable.

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5. *Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference* p. 288 n. But Krishna Sastri writes: "It is worthy of note that *Kālakañjaka* according to Childer's *Pāli Dictionary* is a 'sort of *mala* and *Kalakanja* according to Monier, Williams is the 'name of a Dānava family" (*op cit.*, p. 347).

6. *New Indian Antiquary*, Vol. I, pp. 364-5.

A fresh study of the inscription may be made on the following lines. As said above, while editing the inscriptions in the Brāhmī script recovered from Bhaṭṭiprōlu[7] Dr. Bühler has remarked that of the vowelled consonants, those with the addition of the symbol of *ā* long, a horizontal stroke at the top to the right, have to be read only as denoting short *a* and that *ā* long is denoted by the addition of another line hanging downward at the right of the horizontal stroke. As such, consonant letters without any additional symbol have to be treated as pure or vowel-less consonants. It is found that the latter princpile fits in with the above. If the former principle is also applied here, the fifth and tenth letters read as *pā* and *tā* respectively become short ones *pa* and *ta*. Thus the word *kōsipāṉ* has to be read as *Kosipan* and the word *kuṭupitā* as *kuṭupita*. Similarly the eleventh and thirteenth letters read as *kā* have to be treated as *ka* with the short *a*. The record would then read:

Vēṇ Kōsipaṉ kuṭupita kal kañcaṇam[8]

The word *vēṇ* need not necessarily be taken as having any relation to the territorial division *vēṇāḍu*. It is not known whether this division existed as such in those early days. Even then, the term *Vēṇāḍu* is formed of the words *Vēḷ* and *nāḍu* only. As such it is the Tamil word *Vēl* which in conjunction with Kōsipaṉ becomes Vēṇ. Cf Vēḷ = māṟan = Vēṇ + māṟan. This word is generally taken to mean a chieftain. But it also means sacrifice. In fact later day traditions describe the chieftains

7. *Ep. Ind*, Vol II, pp. 323.4.

8. According to the above principle to read the last three letters as *caṇam* it is necessary that the symbol of ā long is found added to the letters *ca* and *ṇa*. But it is not possible to assert this possitively from the photograph of the inked impression of the record available. Even otherwise it cannot be read any other way. In Tamil a basic or pure consonant will not occur consecutively. Further the number of words beginning with *ña* as the initial letter are very few and no such word with its pair *ca* coming as a pure consonant immediately following it is possible. It is always the other way. The occurence of the letter *ña* with a *ca* immediately following it would clearly demonstrate that *ña* should be taken as a pure consonant and the succeeding *ca* as a vowelled one with the inherent *a*. Similarly the next letter *ṇa* should also be taken as a vowelless consonant with the inherent *a* as it is followed by the final *m*.

having the title *vēḷ* or *Vēḷir* as descendants of one who had sprung from the sacrificial fire.

The Tamil *nighaṇṭu* known as the *Pingaḷandai* and ascribed to the tenth century A.D. gives the meaning benevolence = gift to the Tamil word *vēḷvi*, ordinarily meaning sacrifice[9]. This *nighaṇṭu* contains a large number of words with their meanings not ordinarily found used in literature, but which are found in epigraphy. i.e., *kuṇṭu* = horse, *talai* = first; *taṇicu* = loan etc. Hence the meaning of gift for the word *vēḷvi* found in this *nighaṇṭu* alone, without appropriate literary usage to support it, need not be brushed aside. (Probably the gift of munificent *dakṣiṇas* in a *yajña* sacrifice has some thing to do with it). It may be noted in this connection that the seven persons known as *kaḍai-y-eḻu-vaḷḷal* mentioned in classical Tamil literature had each the title *vēḷ*. Evidently the word *vēḷ* alo denoted a person of small benevolence or liberality. In that case *Kōśipaṉ* of the record was likewise a benevolent person whose benevolence is vouched for by the gift of this monument.

The word *kuṭupita* has been equated by the previous scholars with *koṭṭuvittāṉ*. The use of the word *koṭṭuvittān* in the sense caused to be cut' is very rare in Tamil epigraphy. Further the occurrence of the participle *pi* in the inscription makes the equation untenable, as it should be *vi*, if the word intended is *koṭṭuvittān*. It should therefore be taken as *kuṭuppitta* 'caused to be given or donated' the correct literary form of which is *koṭuppitta*. But it should be noted that the form *kuṭutta* instead of *koṭutta* occurs ordinarily in Tamil inscriptions and is a common feature. (Even now the word is used as *kuṭu* or *kuṭutta* in common speech throughout the country.)

It is to be noted that the doubling of consonants is absent.

This word cannot be taken as the verb with the final *ṉ* dropped. It is the adjectival participle. As such the word *kal-kañ-caṇam* following *kuṭupita* should denote what has been given, the object of the gift mentioned in the record.

The previous scholars have taken the word as *kāḷakāñcanam* with the dental *na* instead of the lingual *ṇa*, clearly seen in the

9. See *Tamil Lexicon*, S. V. *Vēḷvi*.

inscription. Considering the occurrence of the lingual *ṇa* the word may be taken as the compound *kal-kañ-caṇam*.

Caṇam is related to the Sanskrit word *śayana*, meaning bed. It is also the Prākṛt form and is derived from the Sanskrit form with the dropping of *ya* and the conversion of the dental *na* into the lingual *ṇa*. This word also appears to have denoted a dwelling place. This will become clear if it is compared with the expression *Āmattūr caṇṇippāṉai* in Tirunāvukkaraśar's *Tēvāram*[10] on Tiruvāmattūr where the God of the place is referred to as 'he who resides or dwells at Āmattūr.'

The word *kal* denotes a hill, stone or rock. The word *kal-kañ-caṇam* may therefore be taken as denoting 'an abode formed or made of stone.' Then the word *kam*, the *m* of which according to the rules of *sandhi* becomes *ñ* when it is joined to a word beginning with *ca*, should mean cut or made out. In fact the *Tolkāppiyam*[11] ascribes the meaning (*toḻil*) art, operation, employment, to the word *kam* and the commentary called *Virutti* on the *Nannūl*[12] takes it as meaning smith's work. The terms *kammiyar, kammāḷar* etc. denoting the artisan classes in general were themselves derived from the word *kam*. Thus the compound *kal-kañ-caṇam* may be translated as 'the abode or dwelling place made or cut from stone.'

The whole inscription may be translated as follows:

"The abode or dwelling place (or bed) made or cut from stone" caued to be given or donated by Vēṇ Kōśipaṉ (i.e. Kōśipan or Kāśyapa the benevolent philanthropist).

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10. Fifth *Tirumurai*—Tiruvāmāttūr *Tirukkuruntogai*, Verse 8.
11. *Tolkāppiyam, Eḻuttu*, Sūtra 328.
12. *Virutti* on Sūtra 223.

KOṄGARPUḶIYANKUḶAM

This village lies nine and a half miles south-west of Madurai on the Tirumangalam road and is situated on the borders of the Madurai Taluk. On a low range of bald rock about two hundred yards north-east of this small village is a narrow cleft which does not allow one to sit freely, much less to stand. Six caverns have been chiselled in the overhanging rock. On the rounded edge of one of these caverns have been engraved three Brāhmī inscirptions[1] in bold and clear characters of about the second or third century before the Christian era. There are six sets of beds on the ground floor of the three next caverns, most of them without pillow-lofts. Of them four are in good condition and stretch north to south. One of the sets consists of ten beds; another of six; the third, of eight, the fourth, of four, the fifth, of three and the beds in the sixth are all very much damaged. On the whole there are thirty-three beds. The size of the beds varies from 18′×1′6″ in the longest to 5′7″×1′6″ in the shortest.

Higher up on the rock are some Jaina figures and a *Vaṭṭeḻuttu* inscription.

Krishna Sastri read the Brāhmī inscriptions at the place as follows:

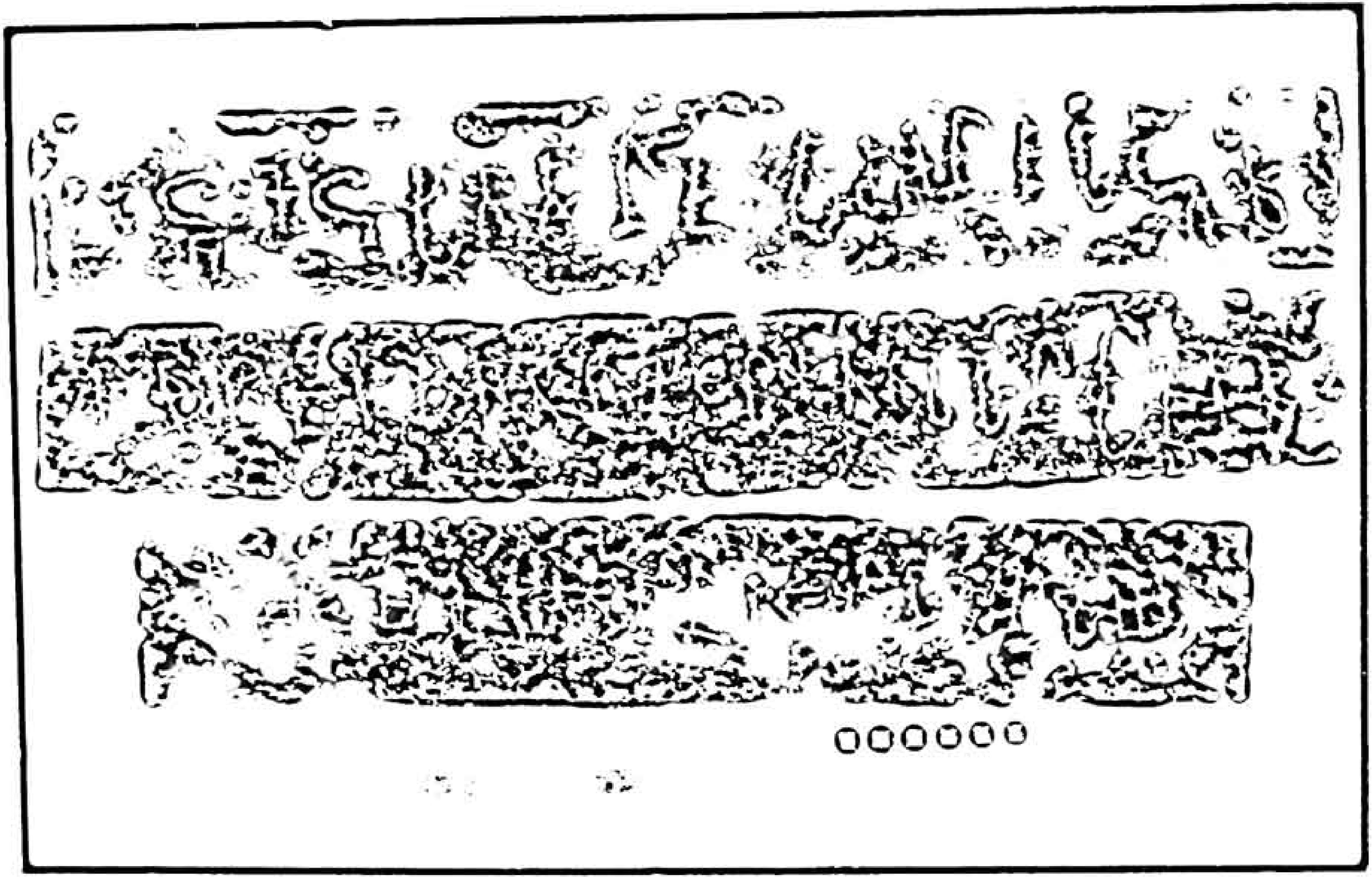
(i) *Ku ṭū ko ṭu pi ta va na ū*
pa ca a na [ū] pa [ṭū] va.

(ii) *Pa ka na ū ra pe t [a]*
t [a] na pi ṭa na i
ta ta ve pō na

(iii) *[ku] ṭ [ū] ko ṭa la ku [i] ta*
ta vi na ce ṭū a t [a]
na lē na.

He notes that the letter read by him as *ṭū* occurring twice as the second and the sixteenth in the first inscription, shows two different forms in the medial *ū* sign and that it is not unlikely

1. 55, 56 and 57 of 1910.



Plate—9 Kongarpuḷiyaṅkuḷam

that the last letter of the same is part of a punctuation which is found in the case of two other inscriptions from Koṅgarpuḷiyankuḷam.

He remarks that *kuṭū* which occurs in the first and third inscriptions is perhaps the same as *kuṭu* of Tiruppaṟankuṉṟam and that *koṭupita, kuṭupita, kuṭupitō* are all connncted with each other and with the root *koṭu*. The five syllables *ū, pa, ca, a* and *na* may suggest the Sanskrit *upadhyayanam*. *Itata* of the second record may also be noted to be the first element of the word *itatavina* of the third record. The five syllables *pa ka na ū ra* of the second may be compared with the name of the old territorial division called Pagaṉūrukūṟṟam, which, however, was to the north of Madurai. *Lēna* of the third record may be the Pāli *lēna* (*layana*) 'cave.' If so, this will be the one clear Pāli word found in these inscriptions. Of the two symbols of punctuation which occur in the second and third inscriptions, the latter is found also in the early Ceylon inscriptions.[2]

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar opines that these relate to the excavation of three caves or three compartments in one cave and reads them as under:

(i) *Kuṭu koṭupitavaṉ Upaca aṉ Upaṟuvāṉ*

(ii) *Pakaṉūr-pōtaṭaṉ Piṭaṉ Itatave lēṉ*

(iii) *Kuṭu koṭalaku Itatavin Cēṭu ataṉ lēṉ*

He takes the word *Upāruvaṉ* occurring in the first inscription as the proper name of a person. The other three words having been already dealt with, he translates the first inscription as "the lay devotee *Upāruvaṉ* caused the cave to be cut."

Regarding the second inscription he says:

The penultimate letter of the last word is damaged. I prefer to take it as *le* with the right arm much worn out, Pakāṉūr is no doubt the name of a village as the ending *ūr* clearly shows. Shortening the penultimate *a* in *Pakaṉ*, we get its modern equivalent to be Pākaṉūr, a village after which Pāgaṉūr-kūṟṟam.

2. See Parker, *Ancient Ceylon*, p. 446, plate.

one of the principal divisions of the Pāṇḍya country, was known in ancient times. It was in this division that Solavandan, Tenkarai and the villages in their vicinity were Situated. The meaning of *Pōtalaṉ* is not clear. Like *ataṉ*, which we sometimes find added to village names, this word may mean 'one belonging to.' The words *Piṭaṉ Itālaven*; with the final ṉ supplied, may be taken as a proper name. *Piḍāṉ* is a shortened form of *Bhaṭāra* which comes in Tamil as Paḍāraṉ. Piḍāraṉ and Piḍāṉ. *Lēṉ* means a cave. Often the word is used with the lingual *ṇ* in place of ṉ (See Hathigumphā and Uṇḍavalli cave Inscriptions)." He translates the inscription as :

"This is the cave of Piḍāṉ Itātāveṉ, a resident of Pākaṉūr."

As regards the third inscription, he thinks that *Koṭu koṭalaku* may be taken to mean the excavator of caves; Itātāveṉ Cēṭuatāṉ is the proper name of a person of which the first element occurs in the second inscription. Cēṭuatāṉ is perhaps associated with *Sreṣṭhi* 'a merchant' *ataṉ* being a personal ending with the euphonic particle *at*.

He translates the inscription as follows :

"This is the cave of Itātaviṉ Cēṭuatāṉ, the excavator of caves."

He also notes that in these three epigraphs the word *lēṉ* is met with twice and *upāsaka* ends with the masculine suffix ṉ, and that in the word *kuṭu* only the letter *ṭ* is used instead of a double one.

At the end of the second and third inscriptions are found two symbols of which the first has in its centre a small circle to which is attached both at the top and the bottom, the straight arm of a hook bent at the right side, which K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks, may be taken to represent *Om*. The second symbol is a rectangle enclosing an upright cross similar to the ones found in the caverns of Ceylon,[3] and is taken as representing the *svastika* mark, usually found in Buddhist inscriptions and tablets.

3. Parker, *Ancient Ceylon*, pp. 449 and 659.

Narayana Rao adopts the reading of Krishna Sastri with a slight emendation in reading the letter *ṭu* of the *Ceṭu* in the third inscription as *ṭṭa*.

(i) *Kuṭū koṭupilavāna ūpāca aua ū paṭūva*

with its restoration in Sanskrit as

Ūpāṭū=a Kuṭū koṭṭapilavāṉ upadhyayānām

meaning.

"*Ūpāṭu'a* had this excavation cut for the treasure."

(ii) *Pakanā=ūra pāt (ā) tānā piṭanā itālavā pōnā* restoring it in Sanskrit as

Pakānā'ūra vṛddhānām dānam
piṭakānām hitarthāya pō (pro?) tānam

and translating the passage as the gift of the elders of Pākāna'ūra for the good (welfare, upkeep) of the 'baskets of books' (the collections of the sacred Buddhist scriptures) of the boys or pupils (the collection of sacred books or scriptures which have been displaced or got confused in arrangement)."

(iii) *Kuṭu koṭalaku itālavi nā ceṭṭa'a tānā lēnā*

the restoration of which in Sanskrit would be

Koṣṭham koṣṭhāgara-kṛtā hitārthāya ; Jñāna-śreṣṭhasya dānam layanam

meanig :

"the apartment for the benefit of the library ; the cave the gift of *Jñānaśreṣṭha.*"

The actual readings of the inscriptions are as follows :

I. *Ku ṟu ko ṭu pi lā vā ṇa ū pā cā*
a ṉa ū pā ṟu vā

Krishna Sastri reads the second letter as *ṭū* while Subrahmanya Ayyar reads it as *ṭu*. The former however, notes that this letter, (as also the sixteenth letter) is

different from the usual form (eg. the fourth letter). But Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the sixteenth letter as *ṟu*.[4] Both of them appear to be *ṟu*.[5] The last letter has been read as *va* and this will indicate that the record is incomplete. So Subrahmanya Ayyar supplies the suffix *ṉ*, indicating third person nominative singular to complete the sentence. Krishna Sastri thinks that it is not unlikely that it is part of a punctuation found in the other two records.[6]

The restoration of the inscription in Drāviḍi will be :

Kuṟu Koṭupitavaṉ Upacaan Upaṟuva.

The first word *Kuṟu* is evidently the same as the Tamill word *kūṟū* meaning section or division and probably it denotes here the particular section or bed. *Koṭupitavaṉ* is the same as *koṭupittavaṉ* with single *p* and *t* instead of the double as required by the rules of formation. We find the word *upacaṉ* in the Kiḻavaḷavu record also, and is the same as *upāsaka*, with which is probably connected the word *uvaccaṉ*. The whole record may be treated as :

"The lay disciple (upacaṉ) Uparuvan of Kuṟukoṭu, the person who donated."

Alternatively the label may be read as follows:

Kuṟukōṭu pitavāṉ ū paca—aṉ ūpaṟuva. Kūṟukōṭu may either mean the name of a place or the lower summit or smaller hill.

Pitavāṉ is very likely connected with the word *pita* or *pitṛ* and thus means a father. Evidently it denotes like *antai* the Holy Father.

4. The former two forms are again found in the third label.
5. Krishna Sastri has taken the second letter as *ṭū* with medial vowel *ū* long, thus differentiating it from the fourth letter *ṭu* where medial vowel *u* short occurs. But the word *kuṭū* does not make any sense ; and there is also no such word.
6. Two horizontal strokes indicative of the *ā* long symbol appear to be added to the right of this letter, thus making it *va ā* to be read in Drāviḍi as *vā*.

Upacaṉ stands for *upāsaka*, the lay devotee and *uparuva*[7] for his name.

Then the whole record may be translated as *Ūpṟuva*, the lay devotee of the Holy Father of Kuṟukōṭu.

II. "*Pā ka ṉa ū ra pi tā t [ā] ṉa pi ṭa ṉa i ta tu ve po ṉa*

Krishna Sastri has read the sixth letter as *pi* while Subrahmanya Ayyar read it as *po*.[8] The fifteenth letter has been read as *ta* by both the scholars. Its similarity with the ninth letter of the next label is striking. Two *ā* long symbols are found to its right at the top. Further there appears also a horizontal stroke at the bottom to the right suggestive of the medial vowel *ū*. Two *ā* long symbols are also found attached to the seventh letter *tā*.

Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the penultimate letter of this label is damaged and prefers to take it as *le* with the right arm much worn out while Krishna Sastri has read it as *po*. But the photograph does not support Subrahmanya Ayyar's reading. This letter is clear enough and cannot be read otherwise than *po*. The last word is definitely *poṉ*, whatever its meaning may be.

The word *poṉ* means gold ; and it also denotes Mount Mēru, as also one of the three mountains destroyed by God Śiva in his aspect of Tripurāntaka. The mythical story of Śiva's burning of the three cities is explained as depicting the victory of the Brahmanical faith over heretical ones—Buddhism, Jainism and Ājivikism. It is possible that the Gold mountain destroyed by Lord Śiva belongs to one of these religions, bearing a name

7. Strictly the name *Ūpaṟuva* should have the masculine suffix of *aṉ*, thus having the form *Ūpaṟuvaṉ*. Or as surmised by Krishna Sastri *va* may after all form part of the punctuation. Possibly the reading and interpretation offered by Subrahmanya Ayyar may be preferred.

8. The sixth letter read as *pi* may also be read as *po*, as it has an arm to its left at the top. In fact Krishna Sastri has read this letter as *pe*. There is also a small arm to the right in the middle of the first line of *pa*, thus having two *ā* long symbols.

sacred to them. The word *poṉ* found here may be in reminiscence of the same.

The word *pōṉ* (with the medial vowel ō long) is used in the sense of a trap in the standard orthodox commentary known as the *Iḍu* , on the sacred Vaiṣṇava literature in Tamil, the *Nālāyiradivya Prabandham.*

The Tamill Lexicon gives the meaning of the word as "cave running into the side of a hill." Probably the word is to be taken as denoting a cavern.

The record is to be restored in Drāviḍi as :

Pakaṉ-ūr Potataṉ Piṭaṉ Ita Tūve pōṉ.

Pakaṉūr is evidently the name of the place *Tūve* which is obviously connected with a bunch of peacock feathers.[9] *Piṭaṉ* seems to be the name of a person. In classical Tamil literature we come across the name *piṭantai* (*Piṭaṉ* + *tantai*) as the name of a person. This word occurs also in the Pugaḻūr record. On the analogy of *antai* (*Ataṉ* + *tantai*) *Piṭaṉ* also becomes a name.

The word *Ita tūve* is found in the form of *ita tūviṉ* in the next label. Very likely the word *ita* occurring in the first label at Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi and the inscription at Sittannavāśal is also connected with this. Evidently *ita* is the same as *ida* found in the Brāhmī inscriptions of Western India as the Prākṛt form of the word Indra.

III *Ku ṟu ko ṭa la ku i ta tu a [vi] ṉa*
ce ṟu a ta ṉa po ṉa

Both Krishna Sastri and Subrahmanya Ayyar have read the penultimate letter as *le* thus taking the word as *lena* or *layana*, meaning a cave. The right arm of the letter required to make it *la* is not clear. Hence it is preferable to take it as *pōṉa* or *poṉ* as in the preceding label.

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9. It is also possible to read the word as *tāve*. But the word does not make any sense.

Ceru Ataṉ denotes the name of a person. (It is also possible to take the letter *ce* as *ci*. Then it would become *ciru* meaning small. *Ciru Ataṉ* would then mean *Ataṉ*, the small or junior. But the word *ciru* does not appear to have been used in this sense in early days).

The label is to be restored in Drāviḍi as :

Kuṟu koṭalku ita tūviṉ Ceru Ataṉ pōṉ

Tūviṉ probably means a person having a bunch of (peacock) feathers,[10] and *ita* stands for Indra. These have been found in the previous label.

The interpretation of the terms *Kuru koṭalku* etc. discussed in the first label may equally apply here.

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10. It is possible to read this word as *tavis*. But it does not make any sense.

The places is near Solavandan in the Madurai District. On the top of a hillock in the Nāgamalai chain, a mile to the south of the hamlet, there is a natural cavern facing south and giving a good view of the surrounding country. Locally the cave is known as *Uṇḍaṉ kal.* The height of this natural recess is, except at the opening, not much and so to move about in it with ease is difficult. The floor is rugged and sloping inwards. Narrow stone beds have been cut into the rock on the floor with low depression in two rows of four and eight respectively, close to the uneven rocky walls on either side. In some cases a few beds have been partitioned off from each other by their ridges running the whole length of the beds. There are no pillow-lofts in stone for these beds; but on the pillow side of three of them labels in the Brāhmi script have been incised.[1] The characters have been assigned to the third or second century B.C.[2] The stone beds at the cave are also referred to by the name *Uṇḍaṉ kallu.*

Krishna Sastri has not discussed these records in his paper as they were discovered and copied only after he wrote.

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar has not given the text of the three inscriptions exactly as found on the stone, but only the text as amended by him.

I. *Antai Pikaṉ mākaṉ vēṇ taṉa*

This bed is the gift of Vēṉ, the son of Pikāṉ.

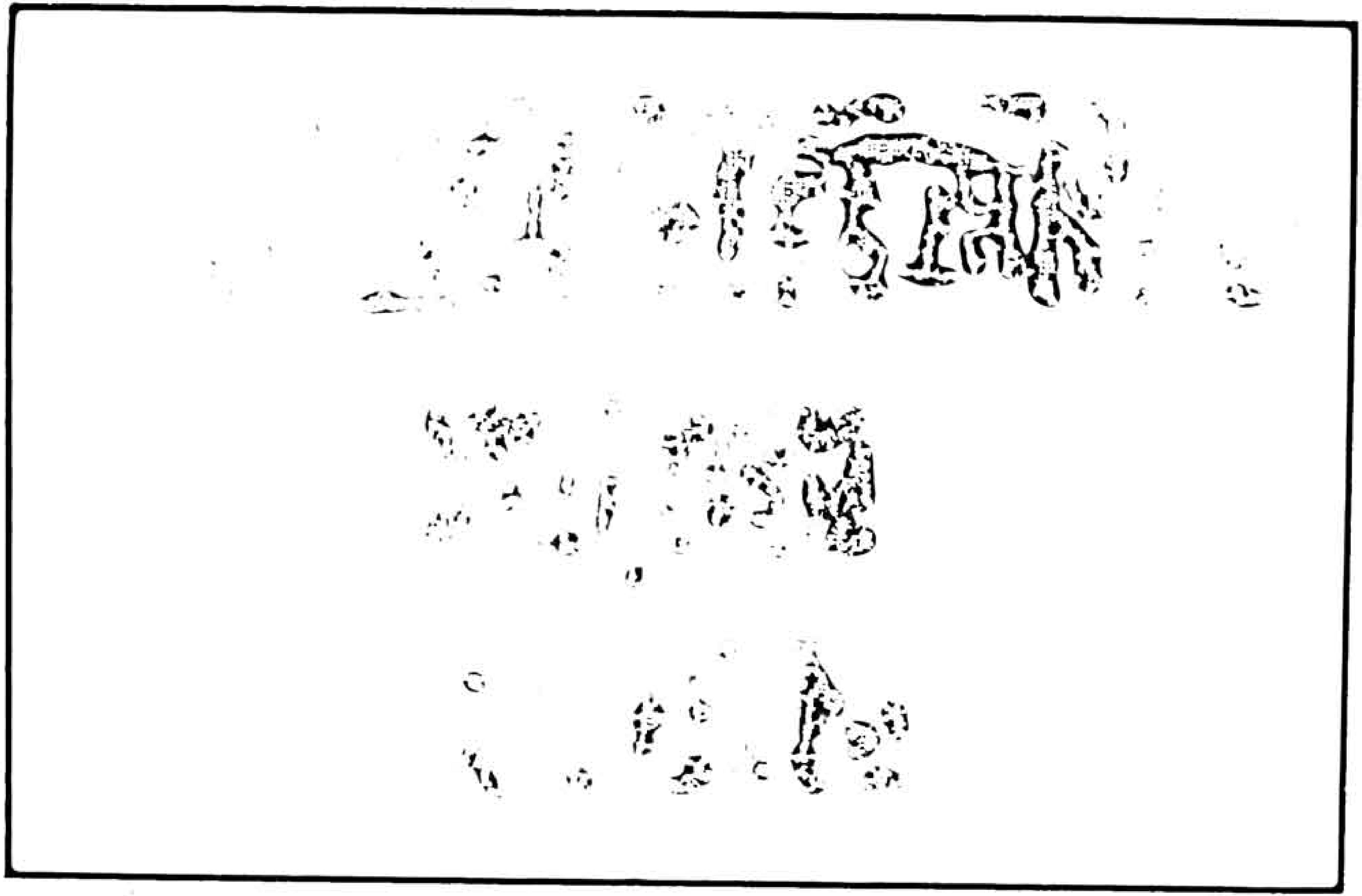
He also adds that it is not improbable that *Antai* is a part of the word Pikāṉ, in which case we must suppose that the inscription only gives the name of the occupant of the bed.

II and III. The other two are taken by him as one record:

Potilai Kuvīraṉ: Vēn Kuvira Koṭupitaṉ

1. Nos. 621 to 623 of 1926.

2. *An. Rep. on South Indian Epigraphy*, 1926-27 pt. ii, para. 8.



Plate—10 **Vikkiramaṅgalam**

In this the first section has been taken by him as the name of the occupant of the cave while the second is translated as "Vēn Kuvīran had it cut."

In the absence of either the inked impression or the actual reading of the records Narayana Rao presumed that the original should have been

(i) *a na tai pi ka nā ma ka nā vā nā ta na*
(ii) *pō ti lai ku vī ra nā ku vī ra nā ko ṭu pi ta*

and restored them in Sanskrit as follows:—

anyad dēyam bhikṣūnām mahatām Vaiśyanām dānāni;
putraḥ Kubērāṇam vaiśyānām Kuberāṇam koṭṭapita (vā).

"Another gift for the *bhikṣus*; the gift of the great householders, the merchants; the sons of Kubēras, the merchant (house-holder)—Kubēras, had it cut."

He thus took all the three as forming one record.

The following is the actual transcription of these records as found engraved on the rock:

(i) *a na tai ya pi ka ṉa mā*
k [ā] ṉa vē na a ta ṉa

Of the fifteen letters which make this record the four from the ninth to the twelfth are slightly damaged. The middle arm of the letter *kā* (1.9) at the left, as also the two long symbols at the right are not clear. The letter may also be read as *ru*. In the eleventh letter, which has been read as *vē*, the symbol for the vowel *e* is found attached to the vertical line in the middle (and not at the top as is usually found) and also projected to the right which would make it *vō*. The twelfth letter *nā* has got two arms at the right to signify *a* long.

I. In accordance with the system adopted for studying the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscription the record has to be read as

Antai y Pikaṉ makaṉ veṉā Atan

It has been pointed out earlier that the word *antai* should be treated as *antai* with the initial vowel shortened and that the

word *antai* formed with the combination of the two words *ataṉ* and *tantai* would mean the Holy Father *Ātaṉ*. The word *Ātaṉ* which is similarly the same as *Ātaṉ* with the initial vowel shortened is derived from the Sanskrit word *Āpta* and is taken as suggestive of a follower of the Ājīvika faith.

This short record may be translated as follows:

Veṉ Ataṉ. son of Antai Pikaṉ.

II. *Po ta lai ku vi ra [ṉa]*

The last letter *ṉa* cannot be made out clearly from the photograph:

This record has to be restored as *Potilai Kuviraṉ*.

Kuviraṉ is another word in many inscription at Siddharmalai. The masculine singular suffix *ṉ* to this word indicates it as the name of a male person. Evidently it is the Tamil form of the word Kubera, the name of the *Yakṣa* chief and lord of wealth.

Potilai, given as an adjective appears to be the name of the place to which Kuviraṉ belonged. The name is suggestive of *Potiyil*, *Potikai* and *Potiyam*, the various names by which the podiyil hills, reputed to be the seat of sage Agastya, are known.

III. *Ce na ku vi ra ṉa*

The word *koṭupitaṉ* added at the end of this section by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar in not found in the photograph of the impression.

The first letter which has been read by him as *vē* looks more like *cē*. The second one which has been read as *ṉa* does not have the base drawn on the left side also. It looks more like the form of *na* found in the Trial alphabets of the Brāhmī script found at Gaya and reproduced by Bühler in his *Indian Palaeography*.[3]

3. See *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXIII (1904,) Appendix, p. 35.

III. This record may be restored as *Cenkuviran̲* (*Śenku-viran̲*).

It may be split as *Cen* and *Kuviran̲* meaning 'Kuviran (Kubēra) who is righteous.'

Thus all the three labels found in this place give out only the names of persons, who were either responsible for the making of the beds, or more probably were occupying them.

AḺAGARMALAI

This is the highest hill in the Tamil country on which we find caverns, beds and Brāhmī inscriptions. Those on the other hills may not be said to be at any great height, though in most cases they are also inaccessible. At the foot of the Aḻagarmalai range, 13 miles from Madurai and four miles from the village of Kiḍārippaṭṭi, is a big cavern very difficult of access, but having in it a good number of beds of varying sizes, and provided with a clear rock spring of ice-cold water in one corner of the cavern. It has a spacious front of fifty yards and more in breadth on which are made holes and a drain to carry off the rain water falling from the drip ledge. The inscriptions in the cavern are eight in number. One of these is written on the pillow side of a stone bed. The rest are chiselled on the brow of the sheltering rock, thirty five feet above the floor. In the cavern is an image of Ajjaṇandi or a Tīrthankara cut by Ajjaṇandi with an invocatory Vaṭṭeḻuttu inscription below it. The approach to the cavern which is most difficult is through a thick jungle and narrow ravines intercepted by steep rocks, now, however, made easier by the Archaeological Survey of India.

There are on the whole nine labels in the cavern.[1]

Krishna Sastri has read the inscriptions thus:

1. *Ma [ta] ti [rai] yi pō na ku*
   ḷa va na a [ta] na a t [a] na

2. *M [a] ta ti rai ko [pa] pu va*
   ṇi ka na

3. *ya ka na kō ṇa ti ka na*

4. *ka ṇa ka a t [a] na m [ō] ka*
   na a ta na a ta na

5. *Sa [ma] mi si na mi ta ti*

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1. See *MER*, 70—79 of 1910.

6. *Ru pā ṇi ti vā ṇi [ka] na na ḍu . ma ḷā na*

7. *[Vā ṇi] ka nā yu ḷa ñā ta nā*

8. *Ci ka ṭṭha mā ṭu na tā nā tā ra a ṇi y [ā] k [o] ṭū pō tā a va nā*

9. *A nā ka nā na.*

He notes that the expression *Mātatirai* occurs both in the first and second labels, and in the former an extra consonant *y* after *rai* which is a feature of Tamil orthography (seen also in Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi label 5 when compared with the 4th in the same). *Vāṇikana* appears in the second, sixth and seventh labels; and probably this has to be connected with the Sanskrit *vaṇik* or the Tamil *vāṇiyaṉ* or *vāṇikaṉ*. Of the symbols used here for punctuation the *svastika* is familiar. The last two inscriptions are probably fragmentary since they do not end with any mark of punctuation. He also points out that there is space for one letter which has been left blank between the letters *nā* and *mi* in the fifth label. The same is also seen between the syllables *ru* and *pā* in the sixth label.

Subrahmanya Ayyar says that the order of the Aḷagarmalai inscriptions has to be studied on the spot, and that he has transcribed and interpreted as much of them as could be read in a line: He leaves the first five labels, begins only with *vāṇikaṉ* of the sixth label and reads the rest as follows :

Vāṇikaṉ Neḍumalaṉ § ⊞ *Vāṇikaṉ*

yuḷṉātaṉ § ⊞ *Cikaṟamāṟaṉ taṉa*

§ ⊞ *Taraaṇi Kuṭipitaavāṉ aṉakaṉam*

He thinks that the first two have to be taken as the names of the persons that occupied the cave. The next part means: "This is the gift of Cikaṟamāṟaṉ." As a common noun Cikaṟamāṟaṉ means "the glorious carpenter." What follows, according to him, may be taken to mean. "Ṭāra kaṇi caused the cave and the drain to be made." He also notes that in the previous portion not transcribed by him, Māttirai (Madirai) occurs several times

and also the names of two persons who were *poṉkulavaṉ* and *Kūlavaṇikaṉ*, "dealers in gold and grains."

Narayana Rao follows Krishna Sastri in reading the labels and interprets them as follows :

1. *Mātatiraiyi—pōna Kulavānā*
   atanā'a tanā

the Sanskrit restoration of which is

> "*Maṭharakī—putrāṇām [pautrāṇaṃ* (?), *pōtānam* (?)*] Kulapanām ādanāya [asthānāya* (?) *asthānasya* (?)*] dānani*"

meaning

> "the gift of the sons (grandsons ?) of Māṭharakī, the heads of the guild (*kula*), for food (for the guild ?)"

2. *Matatirai-ko papu vāṇikāna*

with the Sanskrit restoration as

> *Maṭharaki—kṛte pāpu, vaṇijām*

meaning

> "the gift for the guild of Māṭharaki given by the chiefs of the villages of the merchants."

He takes *pāpu* as the *Paiśaci* Prākṛt form of '*vāvaya*' a Dēśi word for *Āyukta* or *grāma-mukhya*, an official, the head-man of a village. (*Dēśināmamālā*, 7.55).

3. *Yakānā Koṇatikānā*

restored in Sanskrit as

> *Yakṣāṇām Gonardikānam*

meaning

> "the gift of the merchants (*yakṣa's*) who trade in bulls (who belong to the Gonarda guild; who come from the Gonarda hill."

Plate—11. Aḷagarmalai

4. Narayana Rao takes this label as composed of two items:

(a) *Kaṇaka'a tana*

rendered in Sanskrit as

Gaṇakasya danani

and meaning

the gift of the accountant.

(b) *mōkana alana'a tana*

rendered in Sanskrit as

mokṣāṇam asthanaya danani

and meaning

"gifts for the institution of states of relief (from pain)."

(5 & 6) "*Sama misina mitali rupa ṇiti vaṇikana ṇaṭṭa-malana*"

of which the Sanskrit restoration is

"*samaya-miśreṇa maitri-rūpa niytiḥ vaṇijam naṣṭa malanam*"

meaning

"The vow in the form of friendship mixed with faith in the *samaya* or Buddhist Dharma of the merchants who have their malas or impunities of the soul destroyed."

(7 & 8) "*Vaṇikana yuḷa nalana Cikaṭṭha—malana tana*"

with its Sanskrit restoration as

"*Vaṇijam yūtha (-yula)—nathanam Śrī-Kaṇṭha (Cikaṭṭha-) mātṛṇam danani*"

meaning

"The gift of the merchants, the chiefs of the guilds (of the yula guild?) of the *Śrī-Kaṇṭha-mātṛ-gaṇa* (*Cikaṭṭha-mātṛ-gaṇa*)."

(8 & 9) *tara' aṇiya koṭū pōta a vana'a nakanana*

the Sanskrit restoration of which is

daraka-gaṇika Koṭṭapita avanāya naginīnam

meaning

"The beloved of the excavator (had this) cut for the protection of the *Nāginis.*"

He also adds that the *Nagas* and *Naginis* are frequently met with in Buddhist literature.

A perusal of these records would show that, like the Siddharmalai and Muttuppaṭṭi epigraphs, all these register only the names of either recluses for whom the beds in the caverns were designed, or the persons who caused them to be made.

I. The first record reads :

Ma [ta] ti [rai] yi po ṉa ku la
va ṉa a [ta] ṉa a t [a] ṉa

In Drāviḍi it has to be restored as

Mattiraiy Poṉ Kulavaṉ ataṉ ataṉ

The first word *Mattiraiy* occurs also in the second label without the suffix *y* which is only a superfluous letter, and represents the place name Matirai i.e. the modern Madurai, not far from the place where the record is found. It is well known that Madurai is known as Southern Madurai (Ten Madurai) to distinguish it from northern Mathura, (Vaḍa Madurai) the present Muttra, having the second letter of the *ta varga.* The double *tta* has been evidently used in the present record only to express the second *tha*. The form *Matirai* for this place occurs in Tamil inscriptions: *e.g.* the Cōḷa inscriptions refer to Parāntaka I as Parakēsari who captured Matirai and Īḻam or Ceylon (*Matiraiyum Iḻamum koṇḍa Kōp-Parakēsari*).

Poṉ-Kulavaṉ means merchant trading in gold. Ataṉ Ataṉ denotes the name of the person Ataṉ, son of Ataṉ.

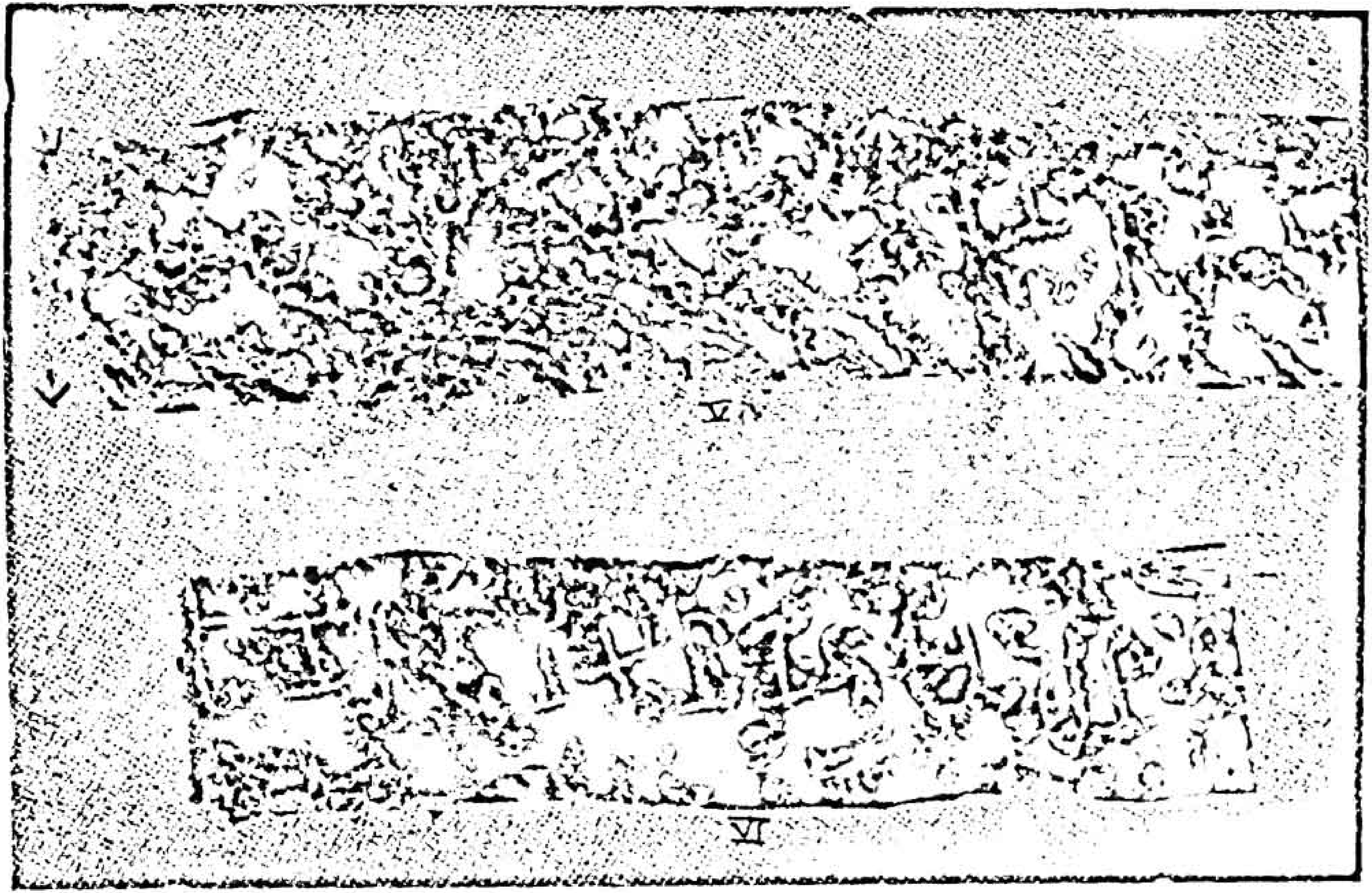
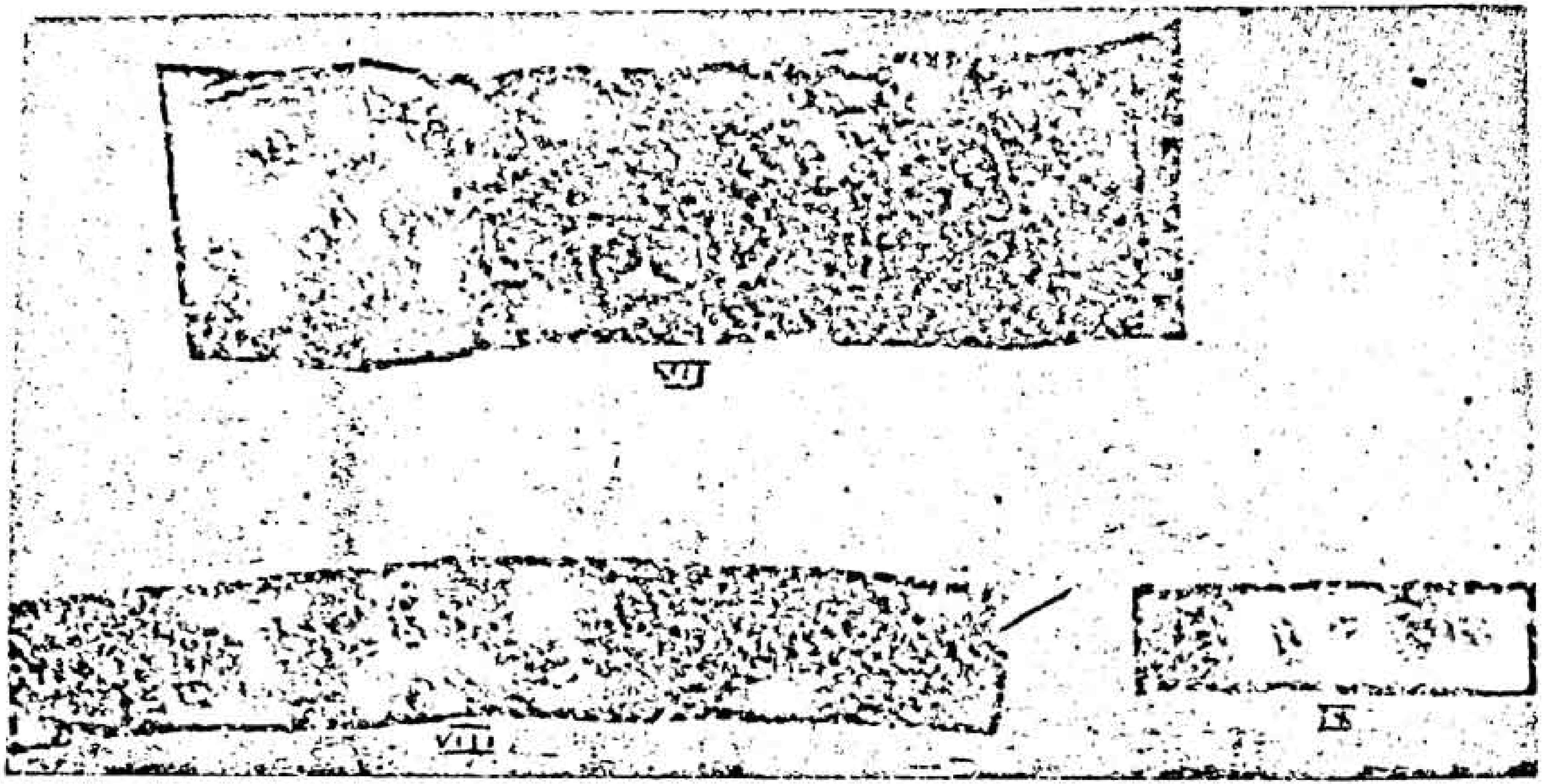


Plate 12 Aḷagarmalai



Plate—13. Aḷagarmalai

The inscription means :

Ataṉ son of Ataṉ, the gold merchant of Matirai (had this made).

(The photograph of this inscription is not available)

II. This label reads :

M [ā] ta ti rai Ko [pā] pu vā ṇi ka ṉa

In Drāviḍi this becomes

Mattirai Koppu vaṇikaṉ

The word *vaṇikaṉ* is preceded by three letters *ko p pu* which mean a flower shaped women's ear ornament worn at the top of the helix. The inscription would mean the *koppu* merchant of Matirai.

III. The actual reading of the label is :

vi ya kā ṉa ka ṇa ṭi kā ṉa

It is to be restored in Drāviḍi as

Viyakaṉ Kaṇatikaṉ

Viyakaṉ seems to be the name of a person. *Kaṇatti* means a kind of Indian Oak. *Kaṇaatikaṉ* may mean one dealing in a variety of wood.

The inscription may mean *Viyakaṉ*, a merchant dealing in timber, like Oak.

IV. The inscription reads :

Kā ṇa ka a t [ā] ṉa m [ō] kā ṉa
a ta ṉa a tā ṉa

Very likely the seventh letter is *mā* and not *mō*.

In Drāviḍi the inscription is to be read as :

Kaṇaka Ataṉ makaṉ Ataṉ

The first word is evidently *Kaṇakkar* from the Sanskrit *gaṇaka* meaning one who is well-versed in the philosophy of

religion or in any science. Cf. *Camaya-k-kaṇakkar tam tiraṉ kēṭṭa kātai* in *Maṇimēkalai* : also *Kaṇakkāyar.*

The famous poet *Nakkīrar,* author of the *Tirumurugāṟṟup-paḍai,* one of the *Pattuppāṭṭu* (Ten Idylls) is known as *Madurai-k-Kaṇakkayaṉār magaṉār Nakkīrar* (i.e. Nakkīrar son of the *Kaṇakkāyaṉār* of Madurai.

The inscription will mean :

Ātaṉ son of *Ātaṉ*, the (*Kaṇakku*) learned.

V. The fifth label reads :

Sā p [ā] mi [si] na mi ta ti.

As mentioned earlier there is some blank space between the fifth and sixth letters, i.e. *na* and *mi*. The occurrence of *Sa* twice in this label once as *sā* and again as *si* shows that the words comprised are not in the Tamil language. Most probably the words are of *Prākṛt* origin. Perhaps it has to be restored in Drāviḍi as :

Sapamisin milli.

Very likely the last word *mitti* is connected with the word *middha* meaing 'sleep' (or *mithya*, the name of a spirit or demi-god of the Jains — *Śaṅkha*).[1]

It is possible that the suffix *in* immediately preceding this word represents the fifth case ending in Tamil, though it should correctly be *iṉ* with ' (ṉ and not n). It is also possible to read the word as *Sammiṣin.* It does not however make any sense. May be it refers to a person.[2]

VI. The actual reading of the sixth label is :

pā ṇi ti vā ṇi [kā] na ne ṭu mā lā ṉa

Krishna Sastri says that there is a letter *ru* at the beginning and that some blank space has been left after that before chiselling

1. The Tamil word *mettai* meaning a bed made of cotton or down as also the storey or a building for sleeping.

2. Two names *Mita* and *Saminitā* are mentioned as representing different forms of Vināyaka. (See R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaishnavism Saivism and Minor Religions*, p. 145).

the next letter *pa*. The symbol which has been read as *ru* is found very close to the punctuation mark at the close of the previous label. Perhaps it forms part of the puncuation mark. Tamil words do not begin with the letter *ru* as the initial.

The label inscription will be restored in Drāviḍi as :

Paṇiti Vaṇikan Neṭumalaṉ

The first word *paṇiti* means adorning, adornment, decoration. So *paṇiti vaṇikaṉ* would mean merchant trading in beauty articles like jewels and ornaments. *Neṭumalaṉ* is the name of a person. It may be *Malaṉ* the senior. The whole label may be translated as :

Neṭumalaṉ the merchant in beauty articles.

VII. The reading of this label is :

Ko ḻu va ṇi ka ṉa yu ḷa [ca] na ta ṉa

The fifth letter has been read as *yu* both by Krishna Sastri and Subrahmanya Ayyar. The bottom stroke indicating the medial vowel *u* will be added to the *ya* only at the right and it will not be added so as to form a prolongation of the middle line. This will become clear by comparing this letter with the letter *yu* occurring in the Anamalai inscription. Again both the scholars have not read any letter between *ḷa* and *na*. But the photograph shows traces of the letter *va*.

The inscription will be restored in Drāviḍi as :

Ko ḻu vaṇikaṉ yuḷa canataṉ

Koḻu means a bar of metal, plough share etc. *Koḻuvaṇikaṉ* may be taken to mean a merchant dealing in *koḻu*. Uḷācendan is probably the name of the person.

The inscription may be translated as :

Uḷacendan, a merchant dealing in iron goods like ploughshare etc.

VIII. Krishna Sastri has read the inscription as a single record while Subrahmanya Ayyar has read it as two labels with

the punctuations the middle dividing the two. But no such mark is seen in the photograph, if what has actually been read by both the scholars as *tāra* are only the marks of punctuation.

The whole record reads as follows :

Ci Ka [ṟu] pi ṟa na ta na
a ṇi [ya] ko ṭu pi ta va na

The third letter of the label is very badly shaped. Both the readings *ṭṭha* by Krishna Sastri and *ṟa* by Subrahmanya Ayyar cannot be sustained. The present reading of the symbol as *ṟu* is also doubtful.

The label may be read in Drāviḍi as :

(a) *Cikaṟu piṟantaṉ*

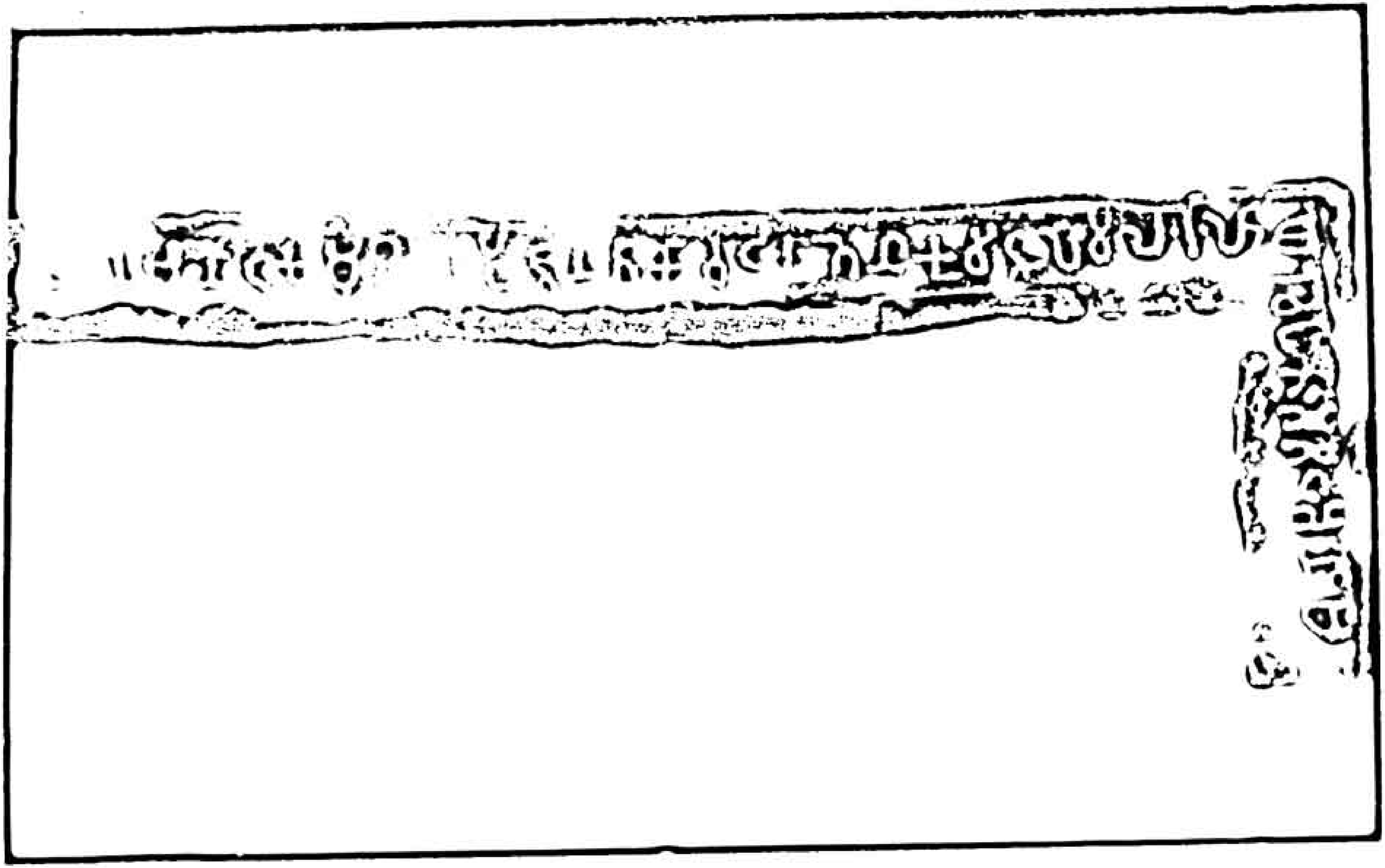
(b) *Aṇiya Koṭupita vaṉa*

Obviously the label records that the drip line (*taaṇi*) for the cave was made by one who was probably born at a place called Cikaṟu.

IX. This inscription reads :

a ṉa ka ṉe ña

The occurrence of the letter *ña* at the end clearly shows that the record is not complete and some letter at the end have been lost. The fragmentary nature of the record does not admit of any interpretation.



Plate—14 S'ittannavāsal

SITTANNAVASAL

This village about nine and a half miles from the Pudukkottai town is famous for a Jaina rock-out temple on hill near the village usually assigned to the seventh century, but probably assignable to a later period, and the beautiful fresco paintings in it. At an almost inaccessible height in another part of the hill there is a natural cavern formed of a cleft which divides the overhanging top portion from the rocky floor below. The spot where the cavern lies is generally known as *ēḻaḍipaṭṭam* on account of the seven (*ēḻu*) square holes which are used as steps for reaching the cavern. Seventeen beds are chiselled in the cavern. Some of the stone beds are damaged; but all of them are provided with a raised portion at one end, which was obviously meant to serve as a pillow. Round the top and left side of one of the seventeen beds in the cavern is a Brāhmī inscription,[1] which is in a good state of preservation. There are also found a few inscriptions on the adjoining beds written in early Tamil characters of about the eighth century A.D. They contain tha names of six individuals, who were probably mendicants who had resolved to spend the last years of thier livers in retired scclusion The name are *Toḻakuṉṟattu Kaḍavuḷaṉ, Tirunīlaṉ, Tiruppūraṇaṉ, Tiṭṭaiccāṇaṉ, Tiruccāttaṉ* add *Śrī Purāṇa-Caudiraṉ Niyattakaraṉ Paṭṭakkāḷ*.

Krishna Sastri has read the Brāhmī inscription as follows:

E u mi nā ṭ [u] ku mu ṭṭha [ū] ra

pi ḍā na tā vu ṭi ī te nā ku

ci ṭū pō ci la ī ḷā ya ra ce ya

tō a ti ṭa a nā ma

He thinks that the words *nāṭu* and *ūra* might indicate the district and village names respectively.

Subrahmanya Ayyar treats the letters *ra* of *ūra*, *nā* of *iteṉa*, *la* of *pōcila*, *ra* of *iḷāyara*, *ya* of *ceyatā*, *ta*, *na* and *ma* of

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1. 388 of 1904; *Rep.*, 1914-15, pt. ii., paras 1 and 2; *Inscriptions of the Pudukkottai State*, Plate I; K. R. Venkatarama Ayyar, *A Manual of the Pudukkottai State*, vol. II, pt. ii pp. 1092-93.

aliṭaanama (the 10th, 20th, 26th, 30th, 32nd, 36th and 39th letters) as basic consonants, and reads the inscription as follows :

Eōmi-nāṭu Kumaṭhūr piṟanta
Kavuḍi Iteṉku Ciṭupōcil Iḷayar ceyta
atiṭhanam.[2]

He has also made slight emendations in the above reading. The second letter is read by him as the vowel *o* instead of *u*. The medial *u* of the seventh letter *mu* and the medial *o* of the 33rd letter *tō* have been dropped, and he treats them only as consonant letters with inherent *a*. He. further notes : " Here *Eōmināṭu* is the name of a territorial division and *Kumaṭūr* that of a village as cleary indicated by the endings *nāḍu* and *ūr*. *Piṟanta* has to be supplied as usual with the final *ṉ* and the permultimate length shortened : it becomes *piṟantaṉ*, which means " one who was born." *Kavudi Iteṉku* is a proper name in the dative case. *Ciṭupocil* may be the name of a village. As in *Piṟanta* the penultimate of *Iḷāyar* has to be shortened, its modern equivalent being *iḷaiyar*. To *ceyta* we have to supply *ṟ*.

The meaning is clearly the following :

Ciṭupociḷ Iḷayar made this *anhiṣṭhānam* for *Kāvuḍi Iteṉ* who was born at *Kumuṭṭūr* a village in *Eōminaḍu*."

He also notes that the long *nā* is clearly indicated in the inscription by a staight horizontal stroke marked on the right side of *na* as distinguished from the inverted ' J ' symbol used in the epigraph to denote *ṉa* and after a brief discussion comes to the conclusion that the word *adiṭṭhāṉa* in the record must refer to the monastery where Bauddha-Bhikṣus practised the vows pertaining to their order.

Narayana Rao has grouped the letters as follows :

E'umi-naṭṭa Kumuṭṭ'ūra-piṭṭana
ta-ka vuṭi itenaku Ciṭṭapocila
Iḷaya-racēyato aliṭanama

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2. *op. cit.*, pp. 296-8.

—restores the same in Sanskrit as:

E'umi-naṭṭa Kumuṭṭha' ūra piṭakanam
trāṇakṛtā vṛddhi-hitena-kṛtā Simhala-
rājyataḥ adhiṣṭhanam

and translates it as "An institution of *Kumuṭṭha ūra* in *E'uminaṭṭa* from the Kingdom of Ceylon for the protection and with the wish of the increase of the *Piṭakas* (the three baskets or collections of Buddhist scriptures)."

C. Sivaramamurti reads the label as follows:

Eumi nāḍu Kumuṭu ūra piṟanta
Kavuḍa i I te ṉa kū
Ci ṭu po ci la I ḷa ya ra ṡe ya ta a ti ta a ṉa ma

and translates it as:

Ciṭupociḷ Iḷayar made this *adhiṣhṭhanam* for *Kāvuḍi Iteṉ* who was born at *Kumatūr*, a village in *Eominādu.*[3]

K. R. Srinivasan says about the inscription:

"The inscription with slight corrections would read:

Eōmi naṭṭu (Oymā naṭṭu) Kumaṭṭūr piṟantāṉ
kavudi (Kāvidi) Itenukku
Citu pocil Iḷaiyar ceyta adiṭṭanam

and translates it as:

"Unto *Kāvidi Iteṉ* (*Iteṉ* bearing the title of *Kāvidi*) a native of *Kumaṭṭūr* in *Eomi* (*Oymā*) *nāḍu* (district), the *adiṭṭānam* made by *Iḷaiyar* of *Ciṭṭupocil.*"[4]

3. *Indian Epigraphy and South Indian Scripts*, p. 158.
4. *Inscriptions in the Pudukkottai State*, (English Translation) pt. I, p. 2.

As pointed out earlier, following the principle adopted in the decipherment and study of the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscriptions the words read as *piṟanṭa* and *ceyta* by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar, treating them as verbs and supplying the final members *n* and *r* respectively, have to be read as *piṟanta* and *ceyta* (the single *ā* symbol added to the consonant making it the consonant with the inherent *a* and not *ā* long), the adjectival participle meaning 'who was born in' and 'which was made by' respectivly. That this is the correct method to be adopted for reading this record is indicated by the penultimate letter read as *ṉa*, having one symbol of *ā* long added to it, while the fourth letter read as *nā* has two symbols added to it at the right.

The eighth letter read as *ṭhū* has a projection to the left at the bottom of the downward stroke indicating the medial vowel *u* short; and this has been tentatively taken as indicating the actual reading of the record is:

E o mi nā ṭu ku mu ṭhū ū ra pi rā n ṭā
Kā vu ṭi i ṭe ṉa ku ci ru po ci la -
i ḷa ya ra ce ya t [a] a ti ṭa a ṉa ma.

It has to be read in Drāviḍi as:

Eomi nāṭu kumuṭhu ūr piṟanta kavuṭi
iteṉku Cirupocil iḷayar ceyta atiṭa-aṉam

Eōmināḍu has been usually indentified with the territory round about the modern Tindivanam in the South Arcot district known in ancient times as Oymānāḍu. It has also been suggested that the area bore another name i.e. Erumānāḍu.[5] But there is no evidence to connect Erumānāḍu with the Tindivanam area. Futher the region does not appear to have had much connection with the Śittannavāśal area. In the Ernad taluk of the Kolikode district in the Kerala State there was a division called Ōmayanāḍu in which there was a village by name Uinaṭṭūr.[6] It is possible that Kumaṭṭūr mentioned in the inscription under study was the same as Umaṭṭur. It that be so, then it may be takenthat the place was in the present Kerala State.

5. *Inscriptions in the Pudukkottai State* (English Translation) p. 2.
6. *T.A.S.*, Vol. III, pp. 198-99; See also A. S. Duraisami Pillai, *Chera-mannar-varalāṟu* (1960), p. 96.

The word *Kavuṭi* should mean one born in or hailing from a place or territory called *Kavuṭa*. It is not known where this *Kavuṭa* was. It is difficult to identify it with the *gauḍa-deśa* a part of modern West Bengal for two reasons. For one thing it is doubtful if the person who is said to have been born in *Kumaṭhūr* in the *Eominaḍu* in the Tamil country could have come all the way to that place and settled down there at such an early period. For another thing it is very doubtful if the name *Gauḍa* was current at such an early date. Therefore it must stand to reason to identify *Kavuṭa* with some place in the Tamil country itself bearing a similar name. Or can the word be another form of the title *Kāviti*, a title conferred by the *Pāṇḍya* kings in the *Śangam* age on some of the *Vēḷaḷas* and leading men.[7] It was the ancient practice to mention the title denoting caste or profession, father's name and native place before giving the name of a person[8] and probably in accordance with that practice the title is given here before the name of the person. But it seems that the word *Kavuṭi* cannot be derived from the word *Kāviti*.

The word *iteṉku* is very likely *iteṉ* with the suffix *ku* indicating the fourth or dative case in Tamil added to it. Then it will mean 'to *Iteṉ*' in which case *Iteṉ* would become a proper name. The word cannot be the official suffix of a chieftain or ruler (cf. *Ātaṉ*). If it is so taken, it may not be possible to explain how or why an *adhiṣṭhānam* was made for him.

Iṭa as a proper name appears also in the Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi record. In the *Nānāghāt* inscription of queen *Nāganikā* we find the word *Ida* where it has been taken as the *Prākṛt* form of Indra or Imdra.[9] Most probably *Ita* of these Brāhmī records is the same as *Ida* of the *Nānāghāt* inscription and has to be taken as standing for Indra. If the word is taken to be a proper name

7. See *Tol. Por.* 30. *urai*.

8. The *Tolkappiyam* lays down the following rule about the practice:

Ūrum peyarum uḍai toḻiṟ karuviyum
yārumcātti yavaiyavai perume
—(*Tol. Marupu.* 74. *pēr.*)

9. See *Arch. Survey of Western India*, Vol. V. pp. 64 ff.

Kavuṭi Iteṉku may be interpreted either as *Iteṉ* hailing from *Kavuṭi* or *Iteṉ*, who bore the title of *Kavuṭi* (*Kāviti*).

It is possible that *Ciṟupocil* was the name of a place. Very probably it was the ancient name of *Śittaṇṇavāśal* itself. In some inscriptions of a later period the place is referred to as *Sittaṇṇal-Vāyil*, meaning the abode of *Arhats* and *Siddhas*. *Ciṟupocil* may be a still older name. *Pocil* may be derived from the two words *pōcu* (*poccai-hill*) and *il* (abode) meaning the abode on the hill or the word may be derived from the term *vassa*=*vāśal* meaning again an abode or place. Thus the whole word may be taken to mean the hill where the *Siddhas* lived.

The word *Iḷayar* may be taken to be the name of a person or simply a young person (*Iḷaiyar*). The interchange of *ai* into *a* is usual in the Tamil language.[10]

Atiṭaanam obviously is *adhiṣṭhānam* and may be taken to mean, as suggested by K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar as "a dwelling place or abode" "where one spends his life in fulfilment of a vow or resolution once taken."

The whole inscription may be translated as:

> *Ciṟupocil Iḷayar* made this *adhisṭhanam* for *Kavuṭi Iteṉ* who was born at *Kumuthūr* in the *Eominaḍu*.

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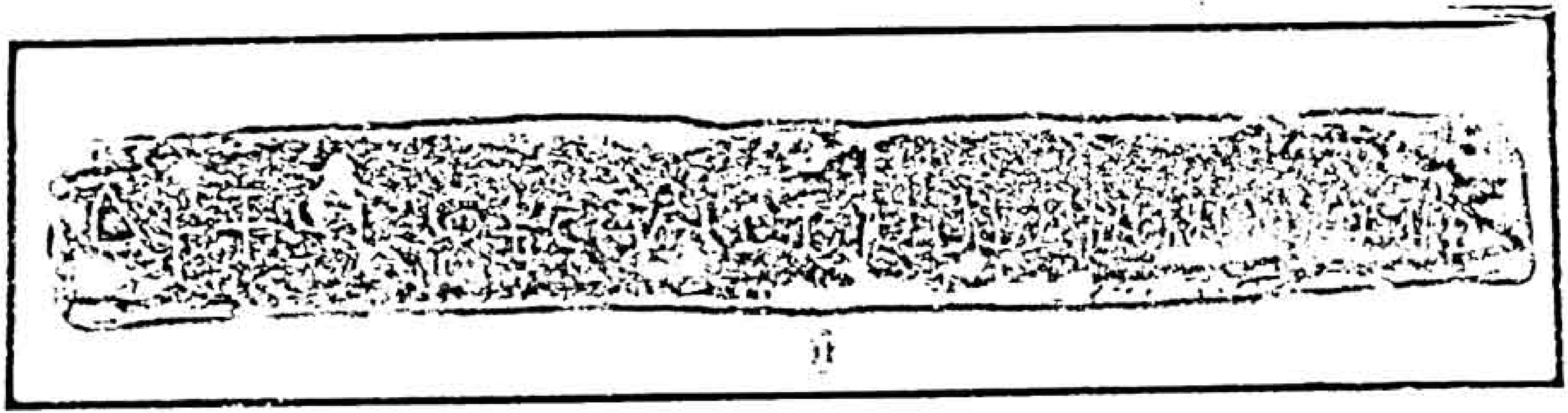
10. The term is taken to refer to a forest tribe known as Maḷavar. It is also said that it is from this tribe that Karikāla the great (Cōḷa king) after the conquest of their forest kingdoms seems to have recruited most of his army. (K. N. Sivaraja Pillai *Chronology of the Ancient Tamils*, p. 64 fn; *Inscriptions in the Puddukkottai state*, (English Translation) p. 3. But it is better to take the word as the name of a person, particularly because he is mentioned as Iḷayar of Ciṟupocil, meaning Iḷayar belonging to or hailing from Ciṟupocil, obviously a place.



Plate—15. Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam

TIRUPPARANKUNRAM

This place near Madurai is famous for its shrine of God Subrahmanya, which itself is a rock-cut one containing early inscriptions. The hill at the place is sacred to the Muslims also on account of the Sicandar mosque on its summit. It is important to the Jains too, who consider it as one of the eight hills sacred to them. The cavern containing the Brāhmī inscription under discussion is situated at an inconvenient place on the steep western side of the hill near the present Tirupparankunram Railway Station and the village *cavaḍi*; and it can be reached by ascending the crude foot-holds cut into the rock. It measures 56 feet in length north to south, 20 feet in depth and 5 feet 10 inches in height in the centre, and can afford shelter to a large number of people from sun, wind and rain. The brow of the hill is cut to a small depth to prevent rain water from getting into the cavern. In front of the vault are bored some holes evidently meant for fixing poles and rails. Not far off is a spring of cool water. Within the cavern there are six beds. A cutting of the rock on the pillow side of the beds contains a clearly incised inscription in Brāhmī characters. The one peculiar feature of this cavern is that it has too low benches measuring 5 feet by 1 foot 9½ inches and the other 6 feet by 3 feet. In another part of the same hill, i.e. on its northern side, there is another small cave with two beds, but without any inscription.

The inscription[1] in the former cave is in a good state of preservation, and the letters in it which have been assigned to the first century B.C. are neatly incised. The record is made up of thirty-one letters written in two parts in a single line separated by a long vertical stroke. The letters in the first part are slightly bigger than those in the second, though written in the same hand, H. Krishna Sastri transcribed the inscription as follows:

Section A

E ru k [ō] [ṭu ra] i jaṁ
ku ṭu ma [pi ka] na pō
la l [ai] ya na

1. 333 of 1908.

Section B

C [ē] ya ta a ya ca

ya nā nai ṭu c [ā] ta nā

He is not sure of the reading of the seventh letter as *jaṁ* on account of its peculiar formation. He thinks that its similarity with the Khalsi Aśokan *ja* given on Bühler's Tafel 11—15—2 is very slight, and it is somewhat like the modern Tamil *ḻa* He also adds that the three letters read as *ya* in Section B are written, somewhat irregularly and that the form of the letter *ca* has in both the cases a vertical tail below as in the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscription.

As regards the contents of the record he remarks that Erukōṭūra may stand for a place name like Erukōṭṭūr and *Kutumapika* may be taken as *kuṭumpika* (of which the Sanskrit form is *kuṭumbika*) occurring in the Pāli inscription and meaning a 'husbandman.'

K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar reads the record as follows, treating as basic consonants all the final *ṉ's* and the *ra* of *ṭura*, the *ma* occurring before *pika* the *ya's* of *ceya* and *aya* and the *ca* of *caya*.

Erukōṭūr Iḻa kuṭumpikaṉ Pōlalaiyaṉ[2]

ceylaa Aycyaṉ Neḍu Cātaṉ

He takes the two sections of the records to relate to two different parts or stages of the same transactions. In the first section there are three words. The first one is *Erukōṭūr* taken as the name of a place as it is clearly indicated with the suffix *ūr*. In fact Erukkōṭṭūr figures as the name of a place from which one of the Tamil poets, Tāyan-Kaṇṇaṉar, hailed. Three of his verses are included in the collection. *Ahanāṉūṟu*.[3] The next one *Iḻakuṭumpikaṉ* would mean the husbandmen of Iḻam or Ceylon

2. *Proceedings of the Third All-India Oriental Conference*, Madras, 1924 p. 238. The word Pōlālaiyaṉ is not found in the reading given there; but it has been included in the subsequent discussion. Evidently it is only an omission in the Text.

3. *Aham* verses 149, 319 and 357.

(derived from Simhala-Sihala-Īla). The use of the first or hard *p* instead of the third or soft *b* and the masculine ending *an* or *n* would clearly point out that this is a Tamil word. But the word Īla is given only with a short *i* *Ila*. The third one, *Pōlālaiyan* is a personal name. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the verb in this section has been omitted and quotes the parallel of No. 18 of the *Inscription of Ceylon* by Parker.

The first word of the second section *ceyta* is taken by him as the finite verb *ceytan* with the final *n* dropped, in the same way as, according to him, in the Marugāltalai inscription. What follows has been taken by him as the name of the person who made it and restored it as Āditya Neduñ-Śattan, treating the final *n* as dropped.

Thus he translates the record as:

"*Pōlālaiyan*, a husbandman of Ceylon, (and a resident) or *Erukōṭṭur* (caused to be cut) and *Āycyan-Neḍuñcattan* made it."

The reading of Narayana Rao is:

(a) *Erukōṭūra Iḷa Kuṭumpikana Pōlalaiyana.*

(b) *Cēyta' aya-cayana neṭu cātana.*

He takes it as Prākṛt and restores the same in Sanskrit as follows:

Erū Koṭira Simhaḷa-Kuṭumbi-Kānam Pōlal-āryānam Caitya-Cayānam niṣṭhā caityānam, and translates it as:

"The establishment of *caityas* and groups of *caityas* of (to, by) the citizens of Pōlal, the dwellers of Ceylon, of Erukōṭūra." He points out that 'Pōlala' occurs as the name of the town in the Uvāsagadasāō and 'Polāsadha' as the name of a garden in the *Abhidhāna-rājēndra*.

The seventh letter which was read tentatively as *jam* by Krishna Sastri has been taken as *la* by Subrahmanya Ayyar following the possibility suggested by the former. It should also be noted that the fifteenth letter *la* of Pōlālaiyan and *ca* the

twenty-ninth letter of the word *catana* have the symbols of *a* long added twice, and as such they have to be read only as long. There has not been much difference among these scholars in the reading of the inscription, but only in its interpretation.

The first section gives the name of the person, Pōlālaiyan, a *kuṭumpikan* of Īḷam and resident of Ērukōṭṭūr. There is no need to supply a verb finite or infinite to this as has been done by Subrahmanya Ayyar on the assumption that it has been left out. This was rendered necessary because he took what followed *ceyta* in the second section as the personal name of a different person. There is no need for this assumption. The construction of the sentence also does not permit of such an interpretation. As in the Marugāḷtalai inscription the word *ceyta* is an adjectival participle meaning 'made.' Hence what follows this word could only mean the object of the grant (i.e.) what has been granted. Narayana Rao takes this portion to mention the establishment of a group of *caityas*. No *caitya* is seen there. There are only rock-cut beds in the cavern. And nowhere is the word *caitya* known to have been used in the sense of a bed. In the expression *aya-cayana-neḍu catana*, the last component part *catana* may be taken as the rendering of the Sanskrit word *sadhana* meaning 'meditation.' The adjective *neḍu* qualifying it would mean 'long' or 'deep.' Thus *neṭucatana* may be taken to mean long or deep meditation. *Cayana* is obviously the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word *śayana*, meaning a bed. The word *aya* at the beginning is difficult to explain. It was probably this word that made the previous scholars resort to other interpretations.

The *Pingaḷantai Nikaṇṭu* gives a Tamil word *ayvai* as meaning a sleeping place, though the word is not found either in other *nighaṇṭus* or in literature.[4] It has been seen earlier that Tamil words with meanings having no literary usage, but given in the *Pingaḷanṭai* are found used as such in inscriptions.[5] Further that the word *ay* should have the meaning of sleep can be deduced from the lullaby of the cradle song in Tamil, the very common and popular burden of which runs as '*lol-lol-lol-loll-ayi.*'

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4. *Tamil Lexicon*, Sv. *ayvai*.

5. See under the Marugāḷtalai inscription.

It will thus mean the bed intended for sleep as also for long and deep meditation.

It was mentioned earlier that the cavern has two stone benches. Evidently these were intended for religious practices and the beds for sleep.

The text and translation of the inscription may be taken as follows :

Erukoṭūr Iḻa-Kuṭumpikaṉ Pōlālaiyaṉ
ceyta āy-cayaṉa-nedu-cātaṉa(m)•

The bed intended for sleep and (also) for long (or deep) meditation made by Pōlālaiyaṉ, a (husbandman) householder of *Iḷām* (Ceylon (and a resident) of Erukōṭṭūr.

The ending *an* in the name of the donor Pōlālaiyaṉ is the Tamil *vikuts*, indicating third person singular masculine nominative. The rendering of it by Narayana Rao as "the citizen of Polāl (Polal-āryānām)" is neither convincing nor correct. The word Pōlāsā occurs in the *Uvasagādasāō* as the name of a town, and the *abhidhānarājēndra* mentions *Pōlāṣāḍha* as the name of a garden. It is well-known that the Buddha delivered his first sermon just after obtaining perfect enlightenment near the Deer Park at Varanasi. This incident is considered very important and finds narration not only in literature but also in sculpture profusely. In the Tibetan version of the incident, the place is referred to as *Polani*[6] and in the Chinese version as *Poloḷai.*[7] It is possible that the name gained sacredness on account of its connection with the Buddha. The Tamil word *Poḻil* which denotes a park has probably some connection with the words *Polani* or *Polalai*. If that be so, it may be presumed that the name of the person in this inscription is formed after the name of the Deer Park and the inscription itself has some connection with Buddhism.

The inscription mentions the donor as a house holder (*kuṭumbika*) of Ceylon (Īḷam) and a resident of Erukōṭṭūr. This village may possibly be identified with the modern Erukkōṭṭūr,

6. *New Indian Antiquary*, I, p. 479.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 489.

the native village of the Tamil poet Tāyan—Kaṇṇanār, whose poems are included in the collection of Śangam work *Aham* as already mentioned.[8]

Three more labels of a similar nature have recently been discovered at the same place. They are said to have been exposed to view in the course of repairs carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India to the cavern. They appear to be incised on the rock-cut beds in the caves. Two of the three labels now copied are found in the cave where no inscription had been previously copied and they contain only a few letters.

A. The first[8a] of them contains only two letters in the Brāhmī script:

na ya

B. The second[9] contains only four letters:

ma ta ye va

These two records being very small, it is not possible to interpret them. Very likely they contain names of persons who were responsible for making the beds in the cavern.

C. The third label[10] is found in the upper and in accessible cavern. The record reads as follows:

a na tu va ṉa ko ṭu pi ta va na

This may be restored in Drāvidi as *anutuvaṉ Koṭupitavaṉ.*

Antuvaṉ is a personal name commonly met with in classical Tamil literature.[11] It is also used as such in combination with other words.[12]

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8. See p. 252.

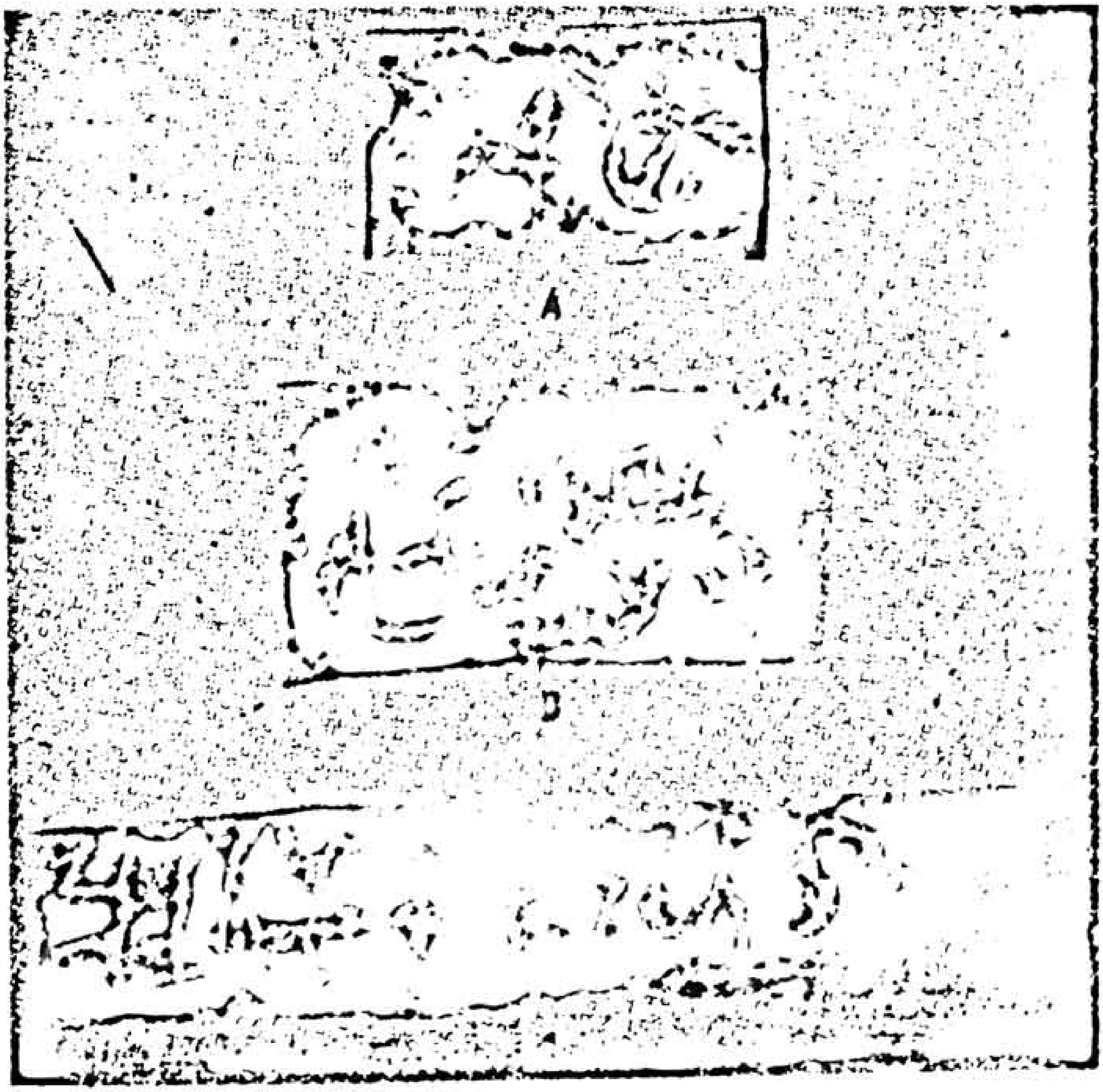
8a. No. 140 of 1951-52.

9. No. 141 of 1951-52.

10. No. 142 of 1951-52.

11. cf. *Patikam* of the seventh *Ten* in the *Padiṟṟuppattu*.

12. cf. *Veṇmāl antuvaṉ-Cellai* in *patikam* of the ninth *Ten, Ibid.*; also Nal-l-antuvaṉār author of poem 83 in *Naṟṟiṇai.*



Plate—16. Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam

Koṭupitavaṉ is evidently the modern *Koṭuppittavaṉ* with the *p* and *t* doubled. As pointed earlier, this doubling is not followed in these records. This word will mean who caused this to be given :

The entire label would mean "Antuvaṉ (is the person who) caused this to be made."[13]

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13. But it is to be noted that this form of construction is not met with in Tamil and is foreign to it. This appears more as the form peculiar to the north Indian language. It would have been better if the order is changed into *Koṭupitavaṉ Antuvaṉ* meaning "the person who caused this to be given is Antuvaṉ." This is probably due to the influence of the syntax in Sanskrit.

SIDDHARMALAI

Siddharmalai (Sages Hill) is a hill near Mēṭṭupaṭṭi, not far from the Peranai Dam in the Nilakkottai Taluk of the Madurai District. The situation of the cavern on the top of the hill lying close to the bank of the River Vaigai which winds its course here to the Dam is most picturesque. There is a spacious cavern in the southern slope of the hill and measures no less than 197 feet in length and 6 feet 8 inches in height. There is a Śiva temple on the top of the hill. A Tamil inscription dated Ś. 1410 is found on the walls of the temple. The hill is called Siddharmalai in it.[1] There is a chamber in it in which two rows of five stone beds, each with a pillow loft, have been cut.[2] There are Brāhmī inscriptions at the head side of the beds.[3] Therefore the inscription may be synchronous with the period of the beds themselves.

The cavern contains in addition a small shrine enclosed by modern railings for a pair of sandals raised on a platform. Over the brow of the cavern, just above the shrine containing the sandals is a Tamil inscription, which refers to them as the sandals of Sahajānandanātha, of about the 14th century,[4] who was a pupil of the ascetic Sachidānandanātha and the author of the *Manōramā*, a commentary on the *Anandalahari*.

Krishna Sastri has read the label as follows :

1. *Pō ti nā [ū] ra a tā [nā].*
2. *Ku vi rā a [na] tai ve ya a tā nā.*
3. *Ku vi rā a na tai ve [ya] a tā nā.*
4. *Ti tō ṛ la a tā nā.*

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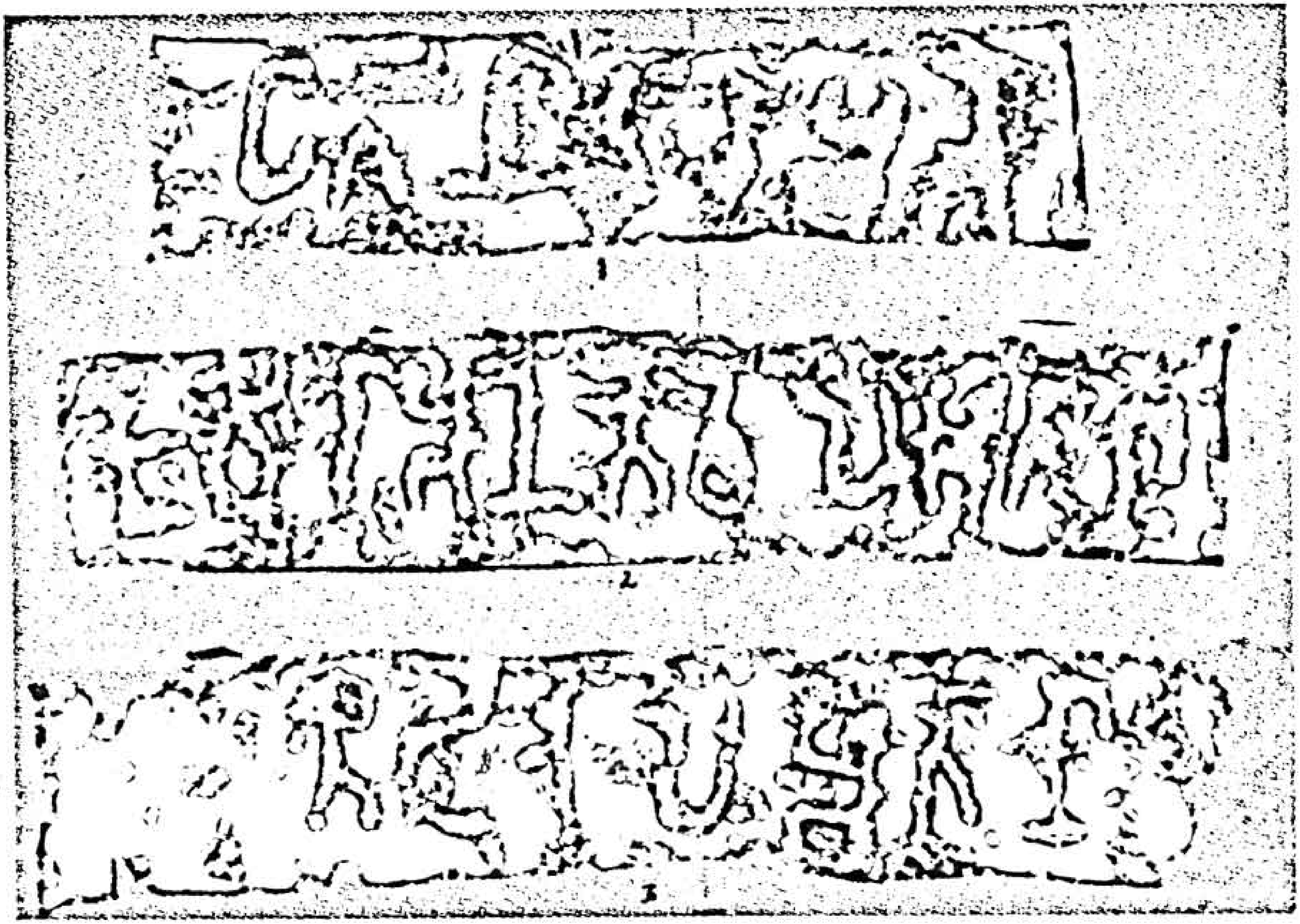
1. 44 of 1908.
2. Subrahmanya Ayyar writes about them : "The beds in this cavern are five. Though they are not so well preserved as those preserved in other caverns, they are of great importance in that they contain Brāhmi inscriptions on the pillow portions of the beds themselves establishing beyond doubt the synchronism of the beds and the formation of the cave."
3. 45 of 1908.
4. 47 of 1908 ; also *Rep.*, part II, p. 91 para 99.



Plate—17. Siddharmalai (Mēṭṭupaṭṭi)

5. *A na tai a ri ya.*
6. *Ti a na tai [i ra] vā ta na.*
7. *Ma dhi r [ā] a na tai [vi] su vā nā.*
8. *Cā na tā na tai cā na tā nā.*
9. *A na tai v [e] na tā a tā nā.*

He notes that in the seventh letter *tā* of the first label, the two lower prongs, of which the one of the proper right is generally straight and the left somewhat curved have been reversed, and that though in the eighth letter *ya* of the third label which is identical with the second label the right half of the letter has been omitted, and thus looks like the modern Nagari य (*ya*) without the top stroke, it may be read as *ya* in consonance with the letters *ve ya* in the second label. Similarly the seventh letter *vi* of the seventh label is not clear on the impression and the photograph.

He also draws attention to the fact that the combination of *atana* occurs six times in these labels, twice in the labels at Aḻagarmalai and once in those of Kongarpuḷiyankuḷam, and that similarly *anatai* occurs seven times in the present labels. Venkayya has tried to explain anatai ariya (E) as 'the dwelling place of the Buddhist Saints.'[5]

Subrahmanya Ayyar's emended reading and translation of the labels are as follows :—

1. *Potiṉūra—a—taṉa* :
   The gift of one belonging to Podiṉūr.
2. *Kuvīra antai Vey-a taṉa* :
   This is the bed of Kuvīra and the gift of Vēy.[6]
3. *Tiṭayil—a—taṉa* :
   The gift of one belonging to Tiṭṭai.
4. *Antai Ariati* :
   The bed of Ariati.

5. *M.E.R.*, 1908, para 59.
6. He has retained only one of the two identical lables (Nos. 2 and 3 of Krishna Sastri's reading).

5. *Antai Iravātaṉ* :
This is the bed of Iravātaṉ.

6. *Matira antai* :
This is the bed of one belonging to Madirai.

7. *Visuvāṉ Cānata antai* :
This is the bed of Visuvāṉ Cānataṉ.

8. *Cānataṉ antai* :
This is the bed of Cānataṉ.

9. *Vēnata—a taṉa* :
This is the gift of Vēnataṉ.

With regard to these inscriptions he says :

"In these inscriptions we note the use of the genitive suffix *a* after the names of the persons ; that *taṉa* has the same sense as *daṉa* 'a gift' which often occurs in the Ceylon inscriptions and elsewhere and that final *ṉ* is in some cases omitted. What has been taken as *anatai* has been read here as *antai*, treating *na* as a basic consonant. We may take it that it is used in the sense of a bed. It is purely a Sinhalese word still used in the same sense and pronounced as *yenda*. What makes this interpretation likely is that these inscriptions are found on the beds themselves. *Antai*, or *antai* may also be treated as part of proper names as in *Eyiṉ Antai*, *Pisir Āntai*, *Añjil Āntai* etc., who figure as *Agam* composers. Similarly also *taṇ* and *tāṇ* may be treated as part of names, cf. *Kirattaṇ*, *Viṇṇattāṇ*."

Narayana Rao questions the meaning 'a bed' assigned by Subrahmanya Ayyar to the word *antai*. He prefers the reading of Krishna Sastri except that of the second letter of the seventh label which he reads as *ti* with Subrahmanya Ayyar instead of as *dhi*.

His grouping and restoration of them are as follows :

1. *Poliṉa 'ūra' a tāna*

restored as

Polina' ūra-sya danani in Sanskrit and translated as :

'The gifts of the village *Poliṇa'ūra*.'

2 & 3. He treats the second and third labels as identical and reads them as

Kuvira' ana tai of which the Sanskrit restoration is :

Kubēranām dēyam meaning 'the gift of the sect called the Kubera's and *vzya'* a *tana* with its Sanskrit restoration.

Vaiśyasya dānāni meaning 'the gifts of the merchant or cultivator.'

Narayana Rao thinks that from the fourth label the lines run one into another.

4 & 5. *tiṭōiḷa'a tanā.*

He thinks that *tiṭō'ila* may stand for the *Prākṛt tittilla* meaning *dvārapāla pratihāra* meaning a door-keeper, messenger, a '*deśya*' word (*Gāthasattasai 556*) or *tittiha* from the Sanskrit *tṛṣṭha*, a congregation of Buddhist monks and nuns (*Viśēṣāvaśyaka bhāṣya, 1035*) and that the *a* after *titō'ila* stands for the genetive singular termination-*sya*. Therefore, according to him the second meaning also suits here :

ana'ana stands for the Sanskrit word *dānānām* and *tai* is to be restored as deyam.

Thus it will mean "the gifts made to the congregation of Buddhist monks and nuns."

5 & 6. *Ariyati' anatai* which becomes in Sanskrit *arya-strīṇām deyam* and means

the gift of the husband—women.

6 & 7. *Irāvatana Matiria'antai* of which the Sanskrit restoration would be *Irāvatānām mātṛṇām deyam* meaning "the votive offering of the mothers of the Irāvata sect."

7 & 8. *Visuvāna Cānatāna tai* of which the Sanskrit restoration would be *Viśvānām Janapadānām deyam* meaning "the votive gift of the people of all the villages." cf. *nānā desiṃ, pekkanḍru* etc., occurring in Telugu inscriptions.

9 & 8. *Cānatāna ana tai* with its restoration in Sanskrit as *Janapadānām anyad deyam* and meaning "another gift of the villagers."

9. *Venatal' tana* with its restoration in Sanskrit as '*Vinatayā danam*' and meaning " the gifts of Vinata (or of a devotee).

The labels may be read and interpreted as follows:

1. The fourth letter of the first label which has been doubtfully read as *ṉ* by Krishna Sastri is damaged. There is a horizontal stroke at the top indicating the medial *ā* long, and therefore it is not possible to read it as the vowel *u*. The letter looks like a badly shaped *va* or *ca*. It may even be taken as a badly shaped *ra* or *ru*, considering the succeeding letter which has been read as *ra*. We may thus take that the whole word gives the name of a place ending with *ūr*. There is also a faint trace of a base to the letter which has been read as *ra*, thus making it look like *na*. Then the last two letters can be read as *vāna* or *cāna*. But this is very doubtful. We may for the present be satisfied with the reading *ūra*, by the officers of the Epigraphy Department who might have had the possibility of examining the record *in situ*. The first three letters making up *potiṉ* evidently form the principal part of the name of the place which is suggestive of the potiyil hill (cf. Vikkiramaṇgalam record).

The last two letters are *Ata* which is evidently the name *Atan*, with the final *ṉ* the masculine suffix missing.

The label would therefore read as

*Po ti ṉa [ū] ra a ta [ṉa]**

with the restoration in Drāviḍi as

Po ti ṉa [ū] r a ta [ṉ] and mean

Ataṉ of Potiṉ=(*ūr*).

2 and 3:

The second and third labels appear the same with the exception of the eighth letter which is found to differ in them. The second label reads:

Kuvirā anatāi Veya Ataṉa.

The eight letter which has been read as *ya* is badly shaped. The third arm at the right is not of equal height with the others;

it is very short. In the third label this letter looks very much like the Dravidian *ḷa*, though this has been read by the officers of the Epigraphy Department tentatively as *ya*. The first two arms are written just like the letter *la* with a small projection to the left at the top of the first vertical line. The third arm has been attached to the bottom of the second and is written downward at the right. Thus the entire letter can be read only as *ḷa*. (possibly the third arm of the eighth letter in the second label, instead of being written as a downward stroke has been written as an upward one).

The third label would read

Kuvira anatai veḷa ataṉa and in the Drāviḍi form it has to be restored as:

Kuvira antai vēḷ Atan

The interpretation of the word *Antai* has been discussed earlier (see pp. 233-34). *Kuvira* is the Tamil form probably through Prākṛt of Kubēra. This is found as *Kubira* or *Kubiṟaka* in the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscription.[6]

This may be translated as: "His Holy Father (of the Ajivika religion) Kuvira and Ātaṉ (i.e. Ātaṉ)."[7] (Is it possible that the word *Vēḷ* means donor ?). If the eighth letter in the second label is really *ya* the word in which it occurs along with the next word would read *Vēy Ataṉ*, which could have been the name of a person.

4. The second letter of the fourth label has been read by Krishna Sastri as *ṭō* and by Subrahmanya Ayyar as *ṭa*, the latter of whom takes the top horizontal line as a mere *serif*. If it is so the inscription has to be read as *Ti ṭa i la a ta ṉa* restoring it in Drāviḍi as

Ti=ṭa=il ataṉ

The first word being the adjective participle of the word *Ataṉ* probably represents the name of a place; and it is possible that

7. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. II, p. 325, 328 and 329.

8. It is also likely that the entire label represents the name of a single person.

it is some thing like *Tiṭiyil* or *Tīṭiyil.* There is a village called Tiḍiyan near Dindigul in the Madurai District. This village finds mention in an inscription from Śrīvilliputtūr of the Bāṇa Chieftain Uṟanga-villi-dāsan who ruled from Śrīvilliputtūr in the fifteenth century.[8] Very likely that Tiḍiyan was the place intended. The record would thus mean,

Ātaṉ of Tiṭiyil.

5. The label reads *Antai Ariya.* In Drāviḍi it will be Antai Ariy. It is not known if it contained any other letter or letters. Some faint traces of writing are however seen in the record. The word *Ariya* may either be *Ariy* i.e. Hari with the superflous suffix *y* or *Āriya,* i.e. *Ārya,* a term of respect. But the word *Ārya* in its Sanskrit form does not seem to have been used in those early times. Only the Prākṛt form *Āiyaṉ* or *Āyyaṉ* was in use. So it is to be taken only as *Ari.* The label may be translated as "Holy Father Ari."

6. Traces of earlier writing are seen in this label also. Probably there was some previous writing on the stone which had to be obliterated to incise the present label, but that was not effaced completely. It is not also known whether the label is to be read in continuation of the previous one or treated as an independent one. Subrahmanya Ayyar takes it as a continuation of the previous one. As it stands the reading of the inscription is:

Ti Ana tai [ira] vā ta ṉa

In Drāviḍi it is to be read as Ti *Antai iravataṉ.*

There must have been one or two letters before *ti.* The reading of the fifth and sixth letters are only tentative, as traces of earlier writing are mixed with the existing ones and make the reading difficult. The suffix *ṉ* indicates that the last word is the name of a person. Probably it stands for *Airāvataṉ* i.e.

8. 577 of 1926; also *S. I. I.*, 1, No. 138 and 139.

Indra, lord of the elephant, Airāvata. We know that the worship of Indra was more popular in the Tamil country in those days than it is at the present day. (cf. *Śilappadikāram* which mentions the festival of Indra held every year at Kāvērippūmpaṭṭiṇam. According to the work there was also a temple for Airāvata at the place.[9]

Or can the word be Iravātaṉ, meaning one who does not beg?

7. The reading of this label is:

Matira Antai Visuvaṉ

The first word evidently stands for the place name Matura (Madurai) which, we know was referred to frequently as Matirai in early Tamil inscriptions (cf. Cola inscriptions of Parāntaka I with the title, *Matirai—yum Iḻamum koṇḍa*).

The inscription means

'Holy Father Visuvaṉ of Madurai'

8. This label reads:

Cā na tā na tai Cā na tā na

In the Draviḍi form it has to be read as:

Cantantai Cantaṉ

Cantaṉ is the name of one of the seven persons noted for their munificent gifts and who lived in the middle period (i.e.) the period immediately preceding the clsssical or Sangam age known collectively as *iṭai-y-eḻuvaḷḷal.*

In the same way as the word *Śattantai* is formed of the two words *Śattaṉ* and *tantai* the word *Cantantai* should be taken to have been formed of the words *Cantaṉ* and *tantai.*

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9. See *Śilappadikāram*, English Trans., by V. R. R. Dikshitar, pp. 53 and 120 *n.*

9. This label reads:

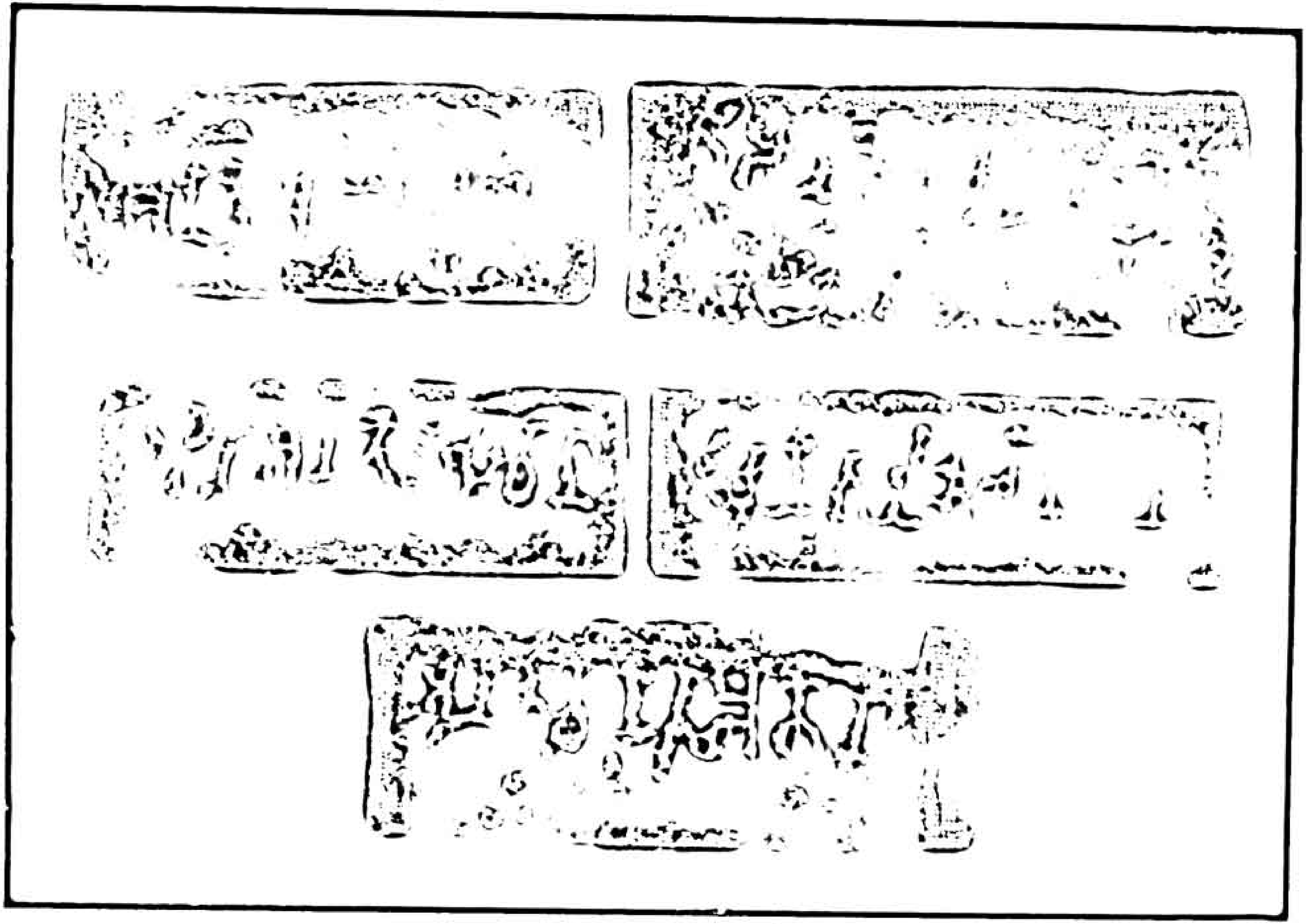
A na tai ve na ta A ta ṉa

and in the Drāviḍi form it becomes

Antai Venta Ataṉ

The word Vēnta *[ṉ]* means a king and more especially Devendra (i.e.) Indra, king of the Celestials.

It will be seen from the above reading and interpretation that all these labels merely record the names of persons who were in all likelihood members of some religious order. It is probable that they were all members of the Ājivika sect.



Plate—18. Siddharmalai (Maṭṭupaṭṭi)

1985

MUTTUPAṬṬI

This is a small hamlet about ten miles from Madurai on the Madurai-Tirumangalam Road. A range of hills known as the Ummanāmalai runs parallel to the road on the left side. The last of the hills near the hamlet has a cavern measuring forty-three feet east to west, twenty-six feet deep (on the eastern side) and about five feet high. It contains a large number of beds, not less than thirty. Krishna Sastri says that there are five Brāhmī inscriptions in the cavern, two of which are highly damaged and cannot be read. Subrahmanya Ayyar refers to them as 'a Brāhmī inscription on a bed and others on a sheltering rock.' He also says that another detached boulder in the same locality contains a bed and Brāhmī inscriptions. In addition there are two Jaina images cut just above the brow of the cavern with no inscription below them.

The three legible Brāhmī inscriptions[1] have been read by Krishna Sastri as follows:

1. *Vi na tai ū ra.*
2. *Cai ya a ḷa na.*
3. *Ka vi ya.*

He remarks that as in other cases the fisrt inscription which ends in *ūra* may be the name of a village.

Subrahmanya Ayyar who has changed the order of the first two reads them as under:

Caiyaḷan̲ Vinataiūṟa Kaviy.

He suggests that these three words may refer to the names of three persons who occupied the cave or that *Caiyaḷan̲ Vinataiūra* may be the name of the occupant, and *kāvi,, gavi 'a cave'* with the penultimate lengthened. He also thinks that it is likely that the word *kāvi* is connected with the Singalese root *kap* 'to cut' and refers to the cutting of the cave, in which case it is to be translated as "This is the cave of *Caiyaḷan̲ Vinātaiūran̲.*"

1. 58, 59 and 60 of 1910.

Narayana Rao prefers the order of Krishna Sastri and reads the inscription as:

Vinatai'ūra caiya'a ḷēna Kāviya.

Taking *Caiya'a* as the form of the Sanskrit word *Caityakā*, *ḷēna* as that of *layana*, a hollow and *kāviya* as of *guhikā*, a small cave and equivalent to the Draviḍian *kavi* he translates the record as follows:

"The small hollow cave-monastery of *Vinataiūra*."

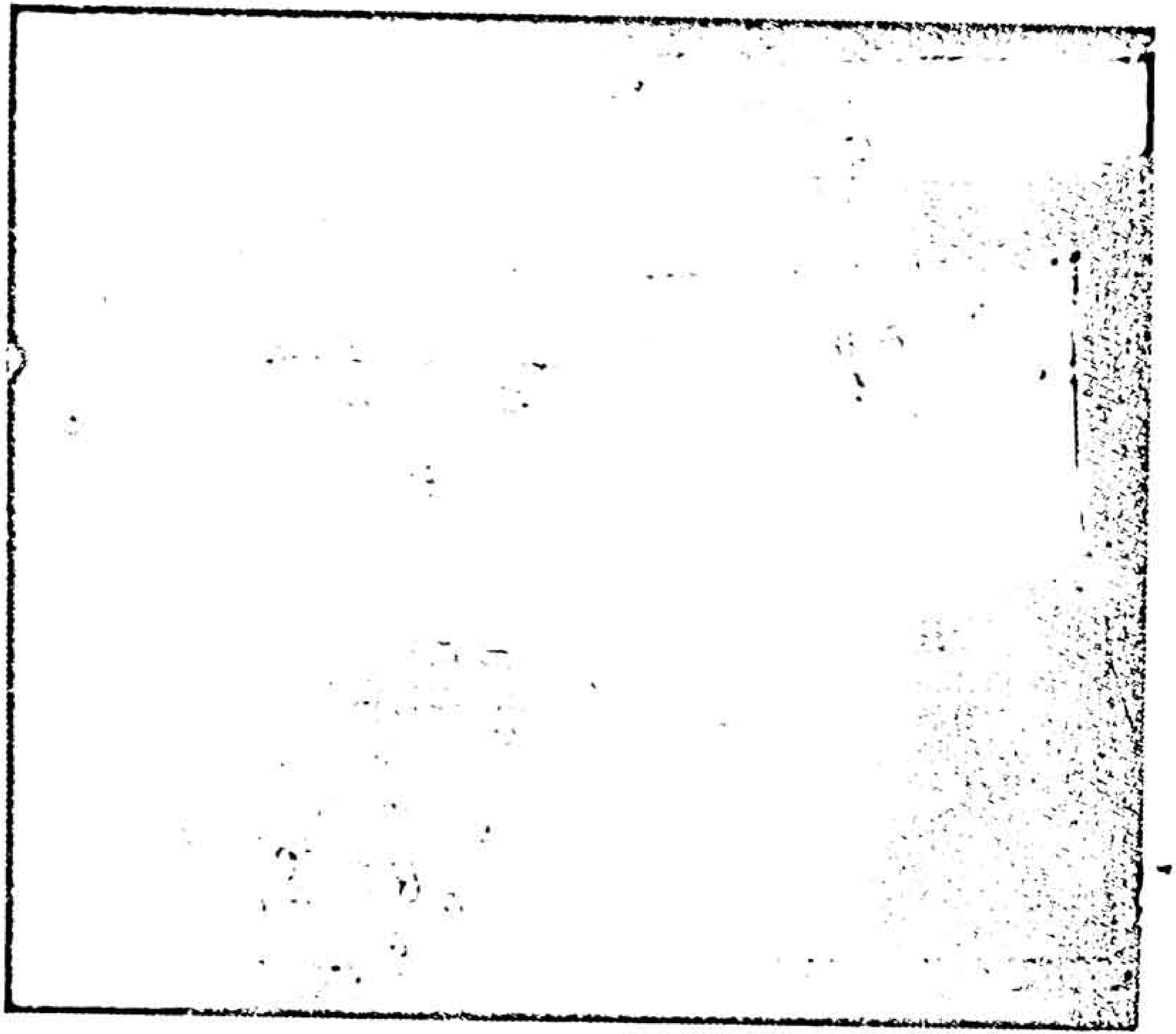
There are three inscriptions (*a*, *b* and *c*) at the place. The first one (*a*) has not been read so far by any of the scholars who have studied the Brāhmī inscriptions in the Tamil country. It is very much damaged and only a few letters can be made out here and there. The letters that could be read are:

... ... *Kai Ko ci vā ṉa* ... ... *Ka [v] ya*

In the penultimate letter, only the bottom portion in the form of a rough triangle is discernible. The upper portion is damaged. Very likely it is *vi*, and the whole word may be made as *Kaviya* or *Kavi* with the addition of a superfluous *y* as suffix. *Kocivaṉa* is to be restored in the Drāviḍi as *Kocivaṉ* or *Kośivaṉ* (*Kauśika*). The other letters are all damaged.

Of the other two records those read by Krishna Sastri as the first two items form one, and the third another. The second record was taken by him as two separate items. But their order has been changed by Subrahmanya Ayyar; and the photograph of the impression supplied supports his order. However, it has to be pointed out that the letters in the first section in the photograph are bigger, while those in the second are smaller. It is not known whether these two sections constitute two separate records or a single one. As such the reading and interpretation of the last two ones have to be made on the presumption that the first record, damaged and not read as it is, is an independent one complete in itself, not having any continuity or connection with those now attempted.

The letters are clear and there is not much difficulty in reading them. Adopting the order of Krishna Sastri, the



Plate—19. Muttupaṭṭi

entire record (second and third photographs) will be as follows:

Vi na tai ū ra cai ya a ḷa ṉa Ka vi ya

Following the principle adopted for reading the Drāviḍi script of the Bhaṭṭiprolu inscription the present inscription may be read as:

Vi na tai(y)=ūr caiyaḷaṉ kaviy

The terminal *y* in the word *kaviy* is a superfluous one; but as noticed earlier it is found added in many of the Tamil inscriptions. The correct word is *kavi*. The context in which the word is used would show that this word should either form part of the proper name or refer to the object of the record. The word as part of a proper name can only mean a poet; but it is very doubtful whether at such an early period to which the inscription belongs this word was used in the meaning of a poet and we do not know of any such usage. The only other possibility is that it denotes an object. In similar contexts in the other inscriptions we find words like *caṉam* (*śayana*=bed), *atiṭṭānam* (*adhiṣṭhāna*), *paḷi* (*paḷḷi*=bed, sleeping place) etc. Likewise the word *kavi* also should denote some such thing. We have the Sanskrit word *gavi* meaning a cave. In the Tiruvoṟṟiyūr inscription of Caturānana Paṇḍita dated in A.D. 968 the word *gahva*, is used to give the meaning 'cave.'[2] The Tamil word for 'cave' is *guhai*; but the connection between it and the Sanskrit word *gahva* is not clear. *Kavi-tal* in Tamil means 'to cover, overspread, bend over, over-shadow, overshade' etc.[3] A natural cavern with an overhanging rock would exactly be an appropriate place to satisfy the description. Obviously the word *kavi* has been used in this record to denote 'a cavern' with an overhanging boulder.

Caiyaḷaṉ is seemingly a proper name as is denoted by a masculine suffix *aṉ*. In the region where the record has been found we find even to day the name S'iyāḷaṉ or Ciyāḷaṉ borne by some men. The name is also occasionally found used in literature

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2. *Ep. Ind.*, xxvii, p. 296 and text verse 3.

3. *Tamil Lexicon*, S. V. *Kavital*.

and inscriptions. The *Śilappadikāram*, for instance, mentions an *Eṭṭi Śāyalaṉ, Eṭṭi*, being a title conferred on a merchant.[4] Some times the name is derived from *Śiyya* or *Śiyā* the *Prakṛt* form of *Simha*. It is possible that the word is related to *Caiyaḷaṉ* also.

The only other word in the inscription under consideration is Vintai(y)ūr and the suffix of *ūr* to the name denotes that the word represents the name of a place. Is it possible that the name of the place is Vinataiyūr or Vintaiyūr ?

Then the whole record would have to be translated as:

> The cavern of (made by or belonging to) *Caiyaḷaṉ* of *Vintaiyūr*.

As mentioned earlier Subrahmanya Ayyar changes the order of the first two words and reads this record as:

Caiyaḷaṉ Vinataiyūra Kāviy and translates it as:

"This is the cave of *Caiyaḷaṉ Vinataiyūraṉ*" taking the final *ṉ* in *Vinataiyūraṉ* as dropped. The name of the person as taken by him would be

> "*Caiyaḷaṉ*, the native of *Vinataiyūr*."

The way of expressing the name of a person is very peculiar and not met with elsewhere in the Tamil country. It does not appear to be a Tamil form wherever the name of a place or family is found along with a personal name, the former is invariably prefixed to the latter. Even in the Prākṛt inscriptions found in Nasik in Western India only the Dravidian practice of prefixing the name of a place or family to that of a person is found used.[5] As such if the above is the correct order of the record *Vinataiūra* has to be interpreted in a different way.

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4. See The *Śilappadikaram* Canto xv, 1. 163, also V. R. R. Dikshitar's translation of the work, pp. 36, 216, 216n, and 217. See also *Maṇimēkalai*, canto. IV, 1.58.

5. *Ep. Ind.*, VIII, p. 59 ff.

It is possible that the expression *Vintai-ūra* is made up of two words.[6] The word *vintai* is not found used in early Tamil literature. But a word *Vintai-K-Karan* is found in the *Tamil Lexicon* giving out the meaning 'artist' *śirpi* (*śilpi*).[7] But the word *śilpi* also denotes an architect and stone mason. Similarly another word *Ūravar* is found used to denote the *Śamaṇar*. The Kaśākkuḍi plates of Nāndivarman Pallavamalla give the word *uḷaiyavaya-p-paḷḷi* as denoting a *Jaina-paḷḷi*.[8] Evidently the words *vintai* and *ūra* of this record indicate the architect and Jaina respectively. Then the record as read by Subrahmanya Ayyar would mean: "The cavern for the Jaina caused to be modelled or made by the architect (or stone mason), *Caiyaḷaṉ*." The word *Caiyaḷaṉ* then would itself seem to be related to the word *caitya*.

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6. From the photograph it appears that the letter *ra* has at its top the symbol for its medial vowel *a* long which shows that it is not a basic consonant, but with the inherent *a* short.

7. *Tamil Lexicon,* S. V. *Vintai-k-karaṉ*. though it looks a late word,

8. *S.I.I.*, II, No. 73, p. 353, 1, 129.

VARICCIYŪR

Some three furlongs to the south of the village of Variccciyūr situated a mile to the east of Viḷattur, itself eight miles due east from Madurai is a hill consisting of three big rocks. The hill is said to belong to the village of Koṇṇattūr. The eastern most of the three rocks is called the Udayagiri and contains a big cavern. It is formed by the projection of two sides of a huge rock, and is spacious enough to shelter a large number of persons under it. A number of beds are cut on the bottom of the cave. The over-hanging boulder about 30 feet from the cavern contains a damaged Brāhmī inscription[1] on its brow just below the *Katarah*. The inscription has been copied in four bits A, B, C1 and C2.

Their readings are :

A. pi re ya ko ṭu pi.

The first letter read as *pi* when compared with the last letter should be considered as damaged. One letter after the last one *pi* is seen in the photograph ; but it cannot be read as the right portion is not visible. Most probably it is *ta*.

The word *pirey* (taking *ya* as a pure consonant as required in the Drāvidi) evidently has to be restored as *piray*, the form in which the word *purai* is actually spoken even to-day, representing a dwelling place or a hermitage. The word *pirai*, derived from *piri* 'to separate' also means a separator or one that is separate. It is possible to take the word in that form itself, thus indicating a separate bed, probably intended for the teacher. The next word *Koṭupi* has to be completed very likely as *Koṭupitaṉ*, followed by the name of the donor. But that is not seen in the photograph.

B. This label is damaged. Only letters here and there are visible in it.

... ta ... ... ra ta [vai] ... [ka] ... na
ra ka la na [la]

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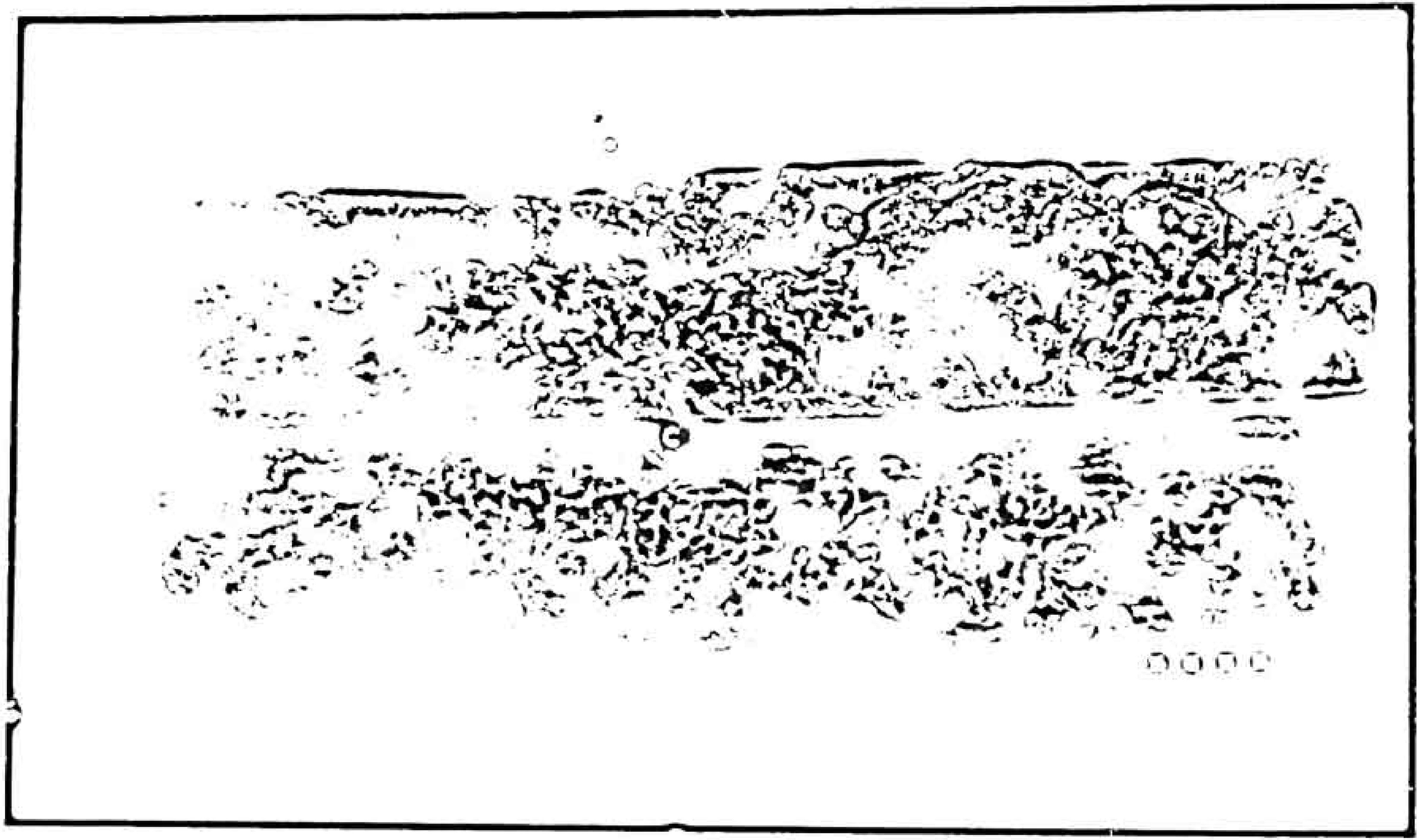
1. 38 of 1908,

Plate—20. Vericciyār



Plate—21. Variccíyar

As it is, it is not possible to make any sense out of it.

C1 and C2.

Both these labels appear to contain to lines of writing. Evidently these two form a single label. They are highly damaged. Only individual letters are visible here and there. It is not possible to read even a few letters consecutively to make up even a single word.

ĀNAIMALAI

Ānaimalai which is about five miles from Madurai on the Melur Road is an important place of pilgrimage. It is evidently so called from the shape of the hill which is very much like a sleeping elephant with its trunk hanging down. The hill is prominently seen from several miles. It is also considered important by the Jainas as one of the eight hills sacred to them. At the foot of the hill are groups of Jaina figures with inscriptions below them, cut on a huge boulder, and also one or two abandoned Jaina shrines. Almost at the top of the elephant's trunk there is a natural cavern not very far from the summit, very difficult to be reached. It is so naturally formed that it affords shelter from rain and sun. The cavern is 23 feet 6 inches long and 3 feet high as its entrance in the centre. Above the entrance, there is a small cutting in the boulder, a drip line, to prevent rain water from trickling into the cave. In the interior there are three double beds and one single bed, the last being in a comparatively lower level. Four more beds are also found covered with earth. Outside the cavern, exposed to sun and rain are eight beds. All of them are chiselled smooth and provided with raised portions on one side meant to serve as pillows for persons lying on them. A little off from the cave is a fine perennial spring of water, one of the necessary accompaniments of all caverns.

A Brāhmi inscription[1] is engraved above the entrance into the cave just below the drip line cutting. This is one of the best preserved of the cavern inscriptions.

Krishna Sastri has transcribed the inscription as follows:

1. *I va [ṁ] je na ḍu tū u ḍai*
yu ḻa [pā] ta na tā nā
ē ri ā ri ta nā.

2. *a tā tu vā yi a ra ṭaṁ ṭha*
kā ɜi pā nā.

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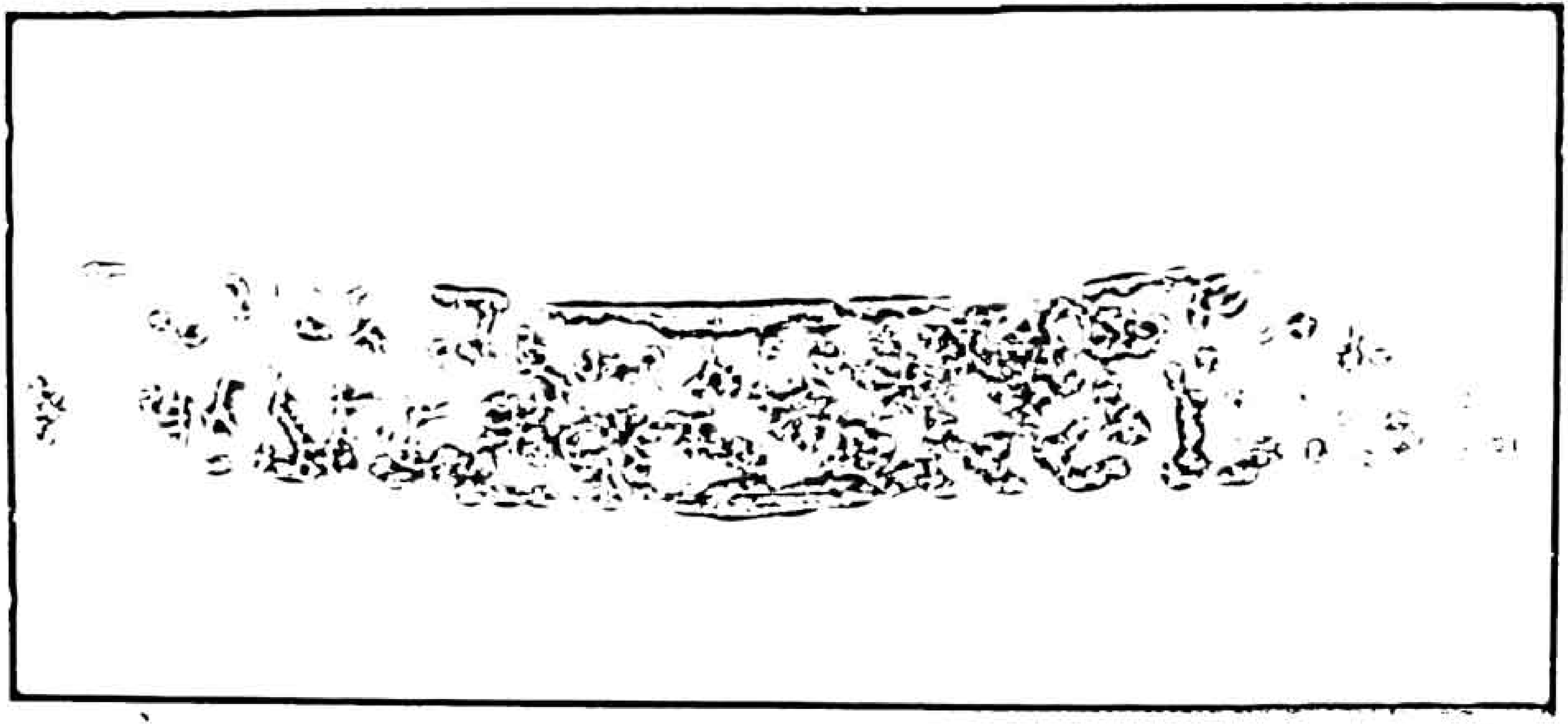
1. 457 of 1906.



Plate—22. Āṇaimalai

He also notes that the fifth and eighth letters, the forms of which have not been found elsewhere, have been read by him as *ḍu* and *ḍai* on the strength of the remarks made by Bühler on the palaeography of the letter *ḍa* in the Bhaṭṭiprōlu inscriptions,[2] and adds that the readings are not certain and they may be conjunct consonants as well. The tenth letter read by him as *ḷa* occurs occasionally in the ancient inscriptions of Ceylon; but here it is rather broad. He says that the eleventh letter read by him as *pa* may possibly be read also as *po* and that the clear dot after the twenty-third letter *ta* (the second symbol in the second line) is probably to be taken as an *anusvara*.

Regarding the interpretation of the record he suggests that *Ivamje nāḍu* may be the name of a country and *uḍaiyu* may correspond to the Tamil word Uḍaiyān 'a chief.' *Eri* in Tamil means a tank; *Āritana* may stand for the Sanskrit *Haritanam*. Finally he diffidently remarks that *taluvāyi* may stand for the Prākṛt *tamluvāya* 'a weaver.'

Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the fifth and eighth letters as *ṟa* and *ṟai* respectively and the third letter as *ku*. His reading of the inscription is as follows:

Iva Kuṉṟatu uṟai yuḷnāt iṉ a taṉa
Eri Aritāṉ Attuvāyi Araṭṭha Kayipāṉ

The occurrence of the *ṟ* symbol immediately following that of *ṉ* fixes the value of these symbols. Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the word *ivā* as plural and also thinks that the final *r* in the word Kuṉṟattūr and the final *m* in the word *taṉam* in the first part of the record have been elided (omitted). He translates the record as "these are the gifts of Yuḷnātan residing Kuṉṟattūr." He treats the latter part as only giving the names of the persons who probably occupied the cave in the first instance and as such feels that it does not need any comment.

2. See *E. I.*, II, p. 323-4.

Narayana Rao accepts the reading of Krishna Sastri with a few emendations and tries to interpret the record grouping the letters as follows:

Ivaku-naṭṭu-tu Uṭṭuyuḷa-Potana-tana
Eri Ārilana Atānluvāyi 'a-raṭṭha-Kayipana.

He treats the fifth and the eighth letters as ṭṭu ignoring the additional signs added to these two and rejecting the value based on the hard consonant ṟ peculiar to the Dravidian languages assigned by Subrahmanya Ayyar. Narayana Rao questions the reading of the third letter as *ku* by Subrahmanya Ayyar when it was read as *je* by Krishna Sastri; but later on accepts the same, with the reservation that it does not make much difference as it occurs in a proper name.

He says that the word *nāḍu* meaning a country "need not be considered a Dravidian word" and derives it from the Sanskrit root *naṭ* 'ta wander,' *tū* in *naṭṭutū* standing for the Sanskrit *tah* 'from.' He also considers that *Potana* stands for *putrānam* or *pautrānam, tana* for *danam, Eri-Ārilana* for *Airavatānam, raṭṭha* for *rāṣṭra,* and *Kayipanā* for *Kāśyapanām.*

The meaning of the epigraph then is "the gift(s) of the sons (grandsons?) of Uṭṭuyula belonging to the Airāvata sub-sect of the Kāśyapas of the Atāntuvāyika-rāṣṭra and (who had come) from Ivaku-nāḍu."

The actual reading of the record is as follows:

Ivakuṉaṟatu uṟaiyuḷa Pātaṉa taṉa Eri Ariḷaṉa
Ataṉluvāyi Ariṭaṭa Koyipaṉa.

Adopting the principle followed in the reading of the Bhaṭṭiprōlu record mentioned earlier, the reading of this record would be:

Ivakuṉṟatu uṟaiyuḷ Pataṉṯaṉ Eri Arilaṉ
Ataṉ tūvayi Ariṭṭha Koyipaṉ

Subrahmanya Ayyar takes *ivakuṉṟatu* as two words *iva* being the form of the Tamil neuter plural *ivai* meaning 'these

and *Kunrallūr* representing the name of the place of the donor with the final *r* dropped. It is true that there are now some villages bearing the name Kunrattūr.[3] But this name does not seem to be found used in former times. There were places having the suffix *kunram* etc. Similarly we may take *Ivakunram* as the name of a place mentioned here with the case ending *atu* of the sixth or genitive case added. Then the correct form would be *Ivakunrattu*. But here the letter *t* is not doubled and the final *u* is indicated as long instead of as short as required. Probably we have to take the form *tū* as indicating *ttu*. Similar instances where the consonants have not been doubled as required are found in other inscriptions also. It is also known that such doubling does not take place in the Prakṛt and only single consonants are used instead of double ones especially in cases of hard letters like *ka*, *ta*, *pa* etc. *Ivakunram* may probably mean "Elephant hill," made up of two words *ivam* from the Sanskrit *ibha*, meaning an elephant, and *kunram* or *kunru* 'a hill.' It would then become a synonym for Ānaimalai, the place where the inscription is found (*Ānai* = elephant and *malai* = hill, mountain). Probably *Ivakunram* was the earlier name of the place.

Subrahmanya Ayyar takes the next word *urai* as the adjectival participle, meaning 'resident of' to the proper name *Yuḷnathan*. The letter *pa* is quite clear and Krishna Sastri also has read it likewise, it cannot be read as *na*. Further the name *Yuḷanāthan* does not make any sense. On the other hand, the expression *uraiyuḷ* occurs in classical Tamil literature in the sense of residing [4]

Palantan is very likely the Tamil form of the Pali word Bhadanta, 'revered master,' which is commonly found used in the Buddhist religious texts while the monks (*bhikus*) address the Buddha.

Eri Arilan seems to be the proper name of the person. *Eri* is the Tamil word for *Agni*. It also means the sun, *Sūrya*. *Arilan* in the same as *Ārilan* with the initial long vowel shortened

3. See for instance a place with that name in the Chingleput District.

4. *Ñānattu Uraiyuḷ Uvarum*.

as in Prākṛt, which practice is frequently found employed in these inscriptions. *Āritaṉ* is from the word *Hārita*, denoting a member of the *Hārita* family. We have for instance *Aiyaṉ* Āritan-ār, the author of the Tamil grammatical treaties *Puṟapporuḷveṇpāmalai*.

Thus the record would mean.

"Revered master (*bhadanta*) *Eri Aritaṉ* residing (at) Ivakunram (Elephant-hill)."

The second record contains the name *Ariṭṭha Koyipaṉ*. Reference has been made earlier to the sanctity attached to the name of *Ariṭṭha*. Previous scholars have read this name as *Araṭṭha* without the medial *i* added to the letter *ra*. This form is also found used in early Tamil literature, among the Buddhists in the south, especially in Ceylon.[5] Among the Jainas also one of the Tirthankaras is named *Ariṣṭhanēmi*. Koyipaṉ is a variant form of Kāśyapan.

The expression *Ataṉ tūvayi*, preceding the above name, probably is made up of two words, *Atan* and *Tūvayi*. The first one *Ataṉ* which is found in many of these inscriptions is evidently the same as *Ātaṉ* used very largely as part of personal names in classical Tamil literature, with the initial long vowel shortened.

The Tamil words *tūval* and *tūvi* mean bird's feather, and the latter form also denotes peacock's tail. Possibly the Tamil word *tūvayi* (*tūvai* or *tūvaiyar*) denotes a person with (a bunch of) peacock feathers in his hand. It is well known that the Digambara Jaina monks carry a bunch of peacock feathers in their hands. Probably the Ājivikas also observed a similar custom. Peacock feather bunch is used for the arts of sorcery and witch craft; and the Ājivikas are said to be adapts in those arts.

This record would mean "Ariṭṭa Koyipan, the Ātan having a bunch of peacock feathers."

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5. See for instance, Araṭṭaṉ S'eṭṭi in *Śilappadikaram* Canto xxx, ll. 47-53. See *also* V. R. R. Dikshitar's tr. of the work pp. 338 and 340.

PUGAḶŪR

Pugaḷūr is a village in the Karur Taluk in the Tiruchirapalli District and a station on the Tiruchirapalli-Erode line of the Southern Railway. The low hillock called the Āṟunāṭṭār hill about two miles from the village, near Vēlāyudhampaḷaiyam contains caverns with rock-cut beds on the pillow-lofts of which are engraved labels in Brāhmi characters. On the summit of the hill there is a Subrahmaṇya temple, about three hundred years old. The place must have been one of considerable importance even in those early days. Its location within ten miles of Karūr reminds one of similar settlements at Āṉaimalai, Aḻagarmalai and other places round Madurai in ancient times. Further at Ardhanārippāḷaiyam, another village about seven miles from the Āṟunāṭṭār hill, are found five beds chiselled out of a rock on the side of a boulder lying in the midst of a field with a spring called *Aivar-śuṉai* (the spring of the five) close by.[1]

Pugaḷūr is mentioned as Pugaḷiyūr in the fragmentary Tamil record[2] of the time of the Vijayanagar governor, Śāyaṇa Uḍaiyār in the Śiva temple at Puṉiai-Pugalūr, a hamlet close by.

The inscriptions on the Āṟunāṭṭār hill are mostly damaged and give the names of the persons who probably occupied the beds or had them cut.[3] The first of them, however, which is comparatively a long record of four lines is of special interest.[4] It ends with the word '*aṟutta*' after which there appear to be two letters which are not clear. As the rock is very much weather beaten, it is difficult to make out this record completely. But it is of interest to note that it mentions three persons who were in the grandfather, father, and son relationship namely Ko Ātan Cellirumpoṟai, Peruṅkaṭuṅ kōṉ and Kaṭuṅkō Iḷaṅkōṉ. This reminds one of the members of the early Cēra dynasty who

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1. The name of the spring is in conformity with the popular tradition that connects such beds and caverns with the famous five Pāṇḍava heroes'. (*Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy* 1927-28, pt. ii para 1).
2. 350 of 1927-28.
3. 349 of 1927-28.
4. 348 of 1927.28 ; see also *Report* for 1927.28 pt. ii, para 1.

bore the same names as may be seen from the *padigams* of the *Patiṟṟuppattu*. But in the present state of our knowledge, it may not be possible to identify the persons mentioned in the inscription. Further the lithic record contains the name of a Ceṅkāyapan who was obviously a Jaina monk for whom the cave was cut.

The inscription which may be assigned to the end of the second century or the beginning of the third century A.D. reads as follows:

A ma ṇa ṇa na ya ṟa ṟu ra cē ṅ ka [ya] pa na ya...
kō a ta na ce la li ru ma po ṟai i ma [ka] na
Pe ru ṅ Ka ṭu ṅ kō na ma ka na...
Ka ṭu ṅ Kō [i] ḷa ṅ Kō aka aṟula ..

According to the general principle followed in reading the Draviḍi inscriptions this record may be read as follows:

...Amaṇṇaṉ yāṟṟūr Cēṅka(ya) paṉ ya
Kō atan Cellirumpoṟai ma(ka)ṉ
Peruṅkaṭuṅkōṉ makaṉ...
Kaṭuṅkō (i) ḷaṅkō aka aṟutta...

and translated as "this is the (cave) of Ceṅkāyapaṉ, a Jaina monk of Yāṟṟūr, which was cut or caused to be cut by Iḷaṅkaṭuṅkō, son of Peruṅkaṭuṅkōṉ, son of Celliṟumpoṟai."

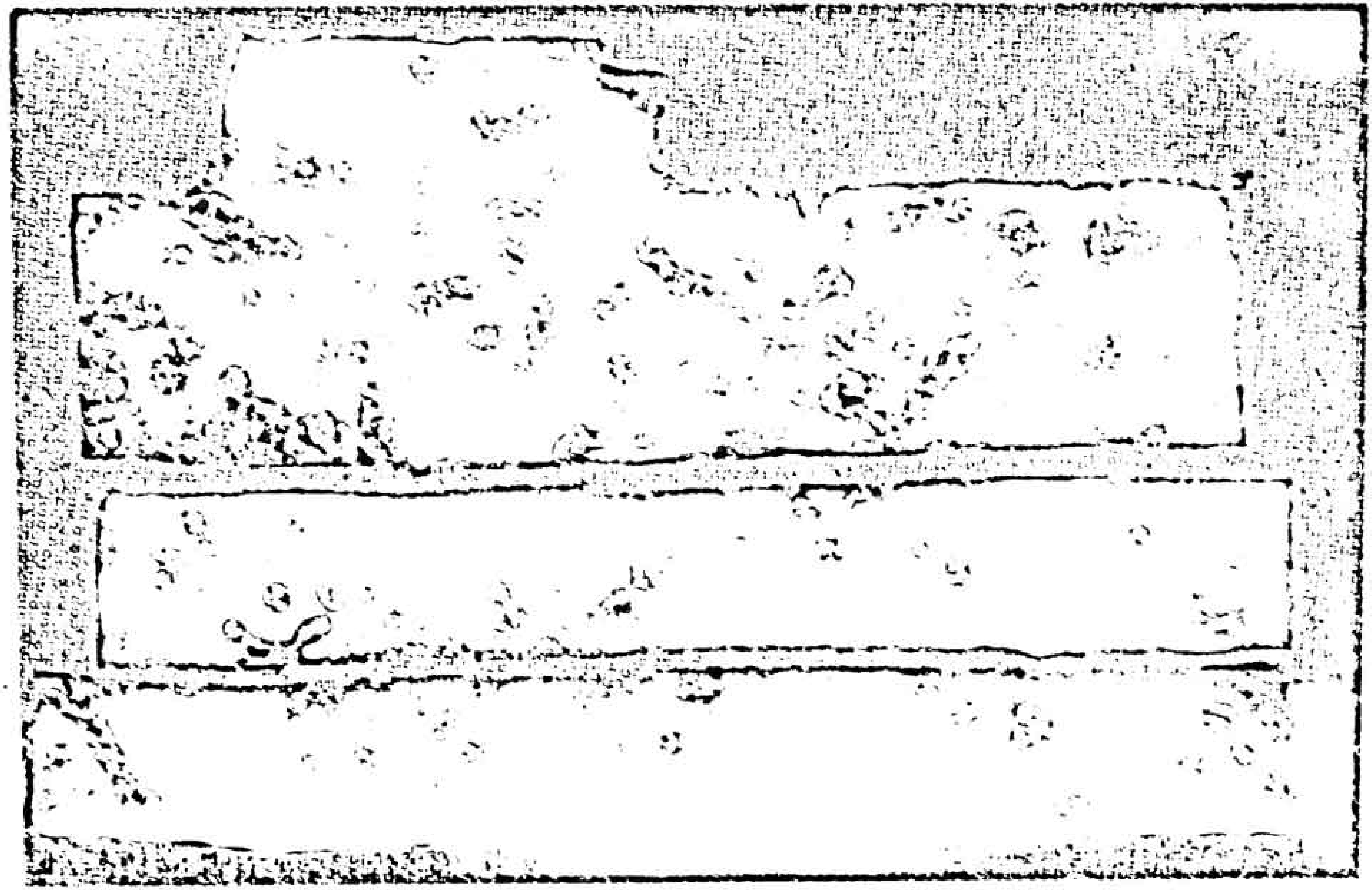
II. The second label[5] reads as follows:

[Ti] a ti ṭ ṭa ṉa m

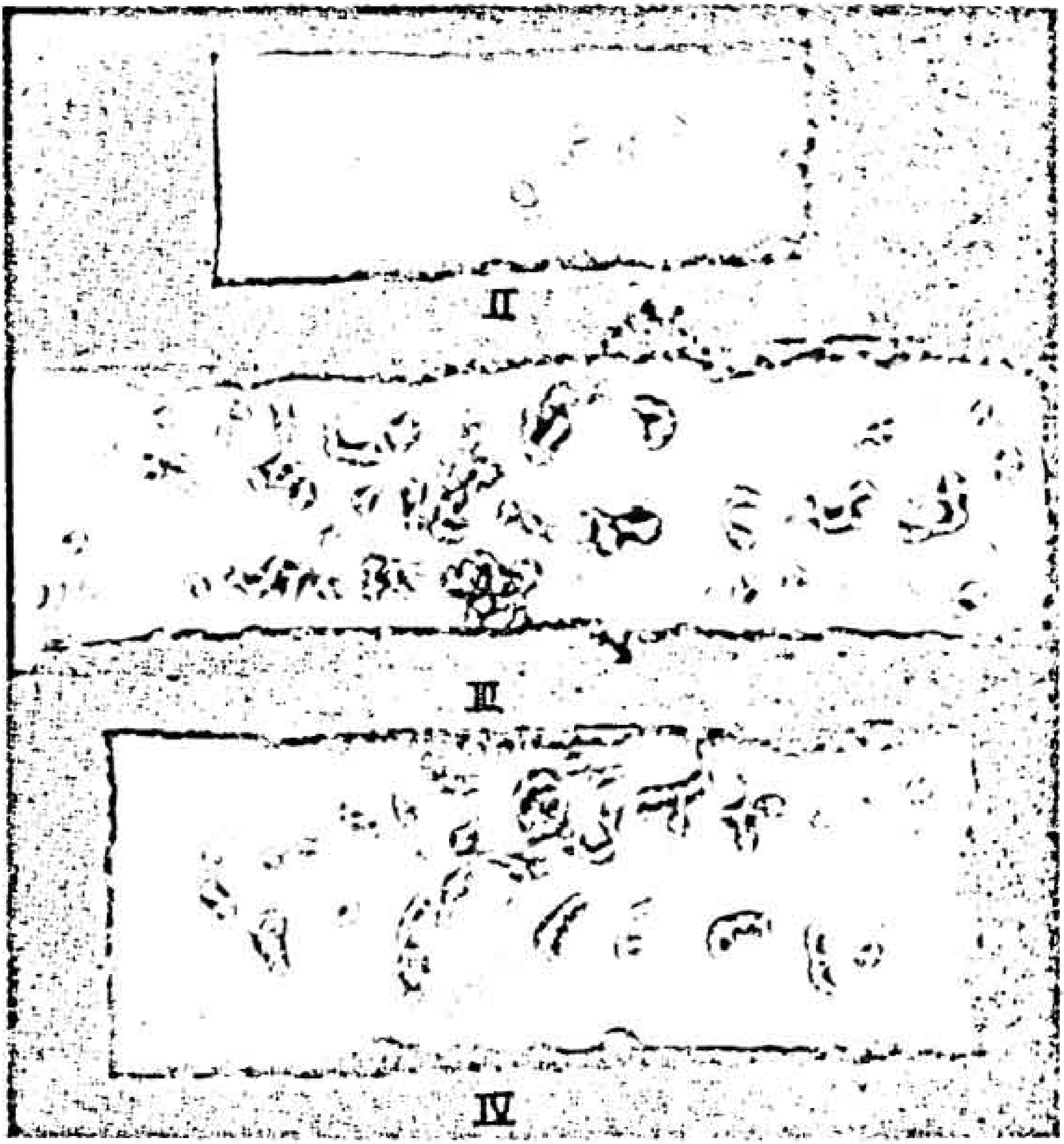
This would show that the beginning of this record is damaged. The lost portion evidently contained the name of the person who donated and was responsible for making the *atiṭṭhaṉam* or seat, of which however only the last letter *ti* is traceable. Very likely it is *netti* as in other inscriptions at the place.

III. The third label is very much damaged. The word *atiṭṭhanam* is found thrice in the label. Very likely it is a

5. 341 of 1927-28.



Plate—23. Pugaḷiyur



Plate—24. Pugaḷiyar

composite record mentioning the *atiṭṭhānams* caused to be made by more than one person. The legible portion of the label may be read as follows:

Ya ... ... i ḷa na ka ḷa
vā ... ... ṉa[na] ta a ti ṭa ... } *... [a ti]*
... ... ta ta a ṭi ṭa ṭā ṉa ma } *ṭa ṭā ṉa ma*[6]

Most probably the right portion of the photograph contains portions of another record.

Only one name, and that in an imperfect form can be made out from the label is *Iḷaṅkaḷa.*

IV. The fourth inscription at the place[7] is of considerable interest as it mentions Karu-ūr and a Poṉ-vāṇikaṉ (gold merchant) of that city called Netti who had the *atiṭṭhāṉam* (seat) made. The actual reading of the record is as follows:

Ka ru ū r po ṉ vā ṇi ka ṉ
Ne t ti a ti ṭ ṭā ṉa m

The two symbols read as *ṉ* in the first line (sixth and tenth) are quite different from the penultimate symbol of the second line also read likewise. In the former, the form appears more like a circle, the end of the vertical curve joining the base, while in the latter it is left hanging without joining. Further the former forms have a dot in the middle in each, evidently to denote that they are pure consonants. The presence of these dots and the writing of the letter *ka*, both initially and in the middle without the addition of any symbol to indicate that it is not a pure consonant but has the inherent *a* short as in the Drāviḍi would point that this record is not written in the Drāviḍi type, but in the system found to have been followed in all the other records of a later date in the Tamil country. The marking of dots to the other basic or pure consonants, though seen, cannot be asserted.

The Epigraphy Department has read the first letter of the second line as *Ni* and taken the word *Nitti* as the name of the

6. 342 of 1927-28.
7. 343 of 1927-28.

donor. But the first letter looks very much like *Ne*, and the word may be read as *Netti*.

The word *atiṭṭhāṉam* (Sanskrit *adhiṣṭhāna*) has been met with previously in the Brāhmī inscription at Śittannavāśal. It was seen above how Subrahmanya Ayyar has explained the word as meaning a dwelling place or abode.

The label as read and explained by the officers of the Epigraphy Department does not contain any verb, finite or infinite or verbal particle. These are inscriptions without any verb. They are all made up of mere names.

It is further to be noted that the letter *ta* sometimes doubled is seen in the other labels also. (e.g. No. I and II etc.). Very likely the word *Netti* is also intended in such places. Then it should be some verbal particle qualifying the word *atiṭṭhāṉam*. Most probably it is connected with the word *Nērtal*, to make a vow and means donated in accordance with a vow taken.

Then the label may be translated as

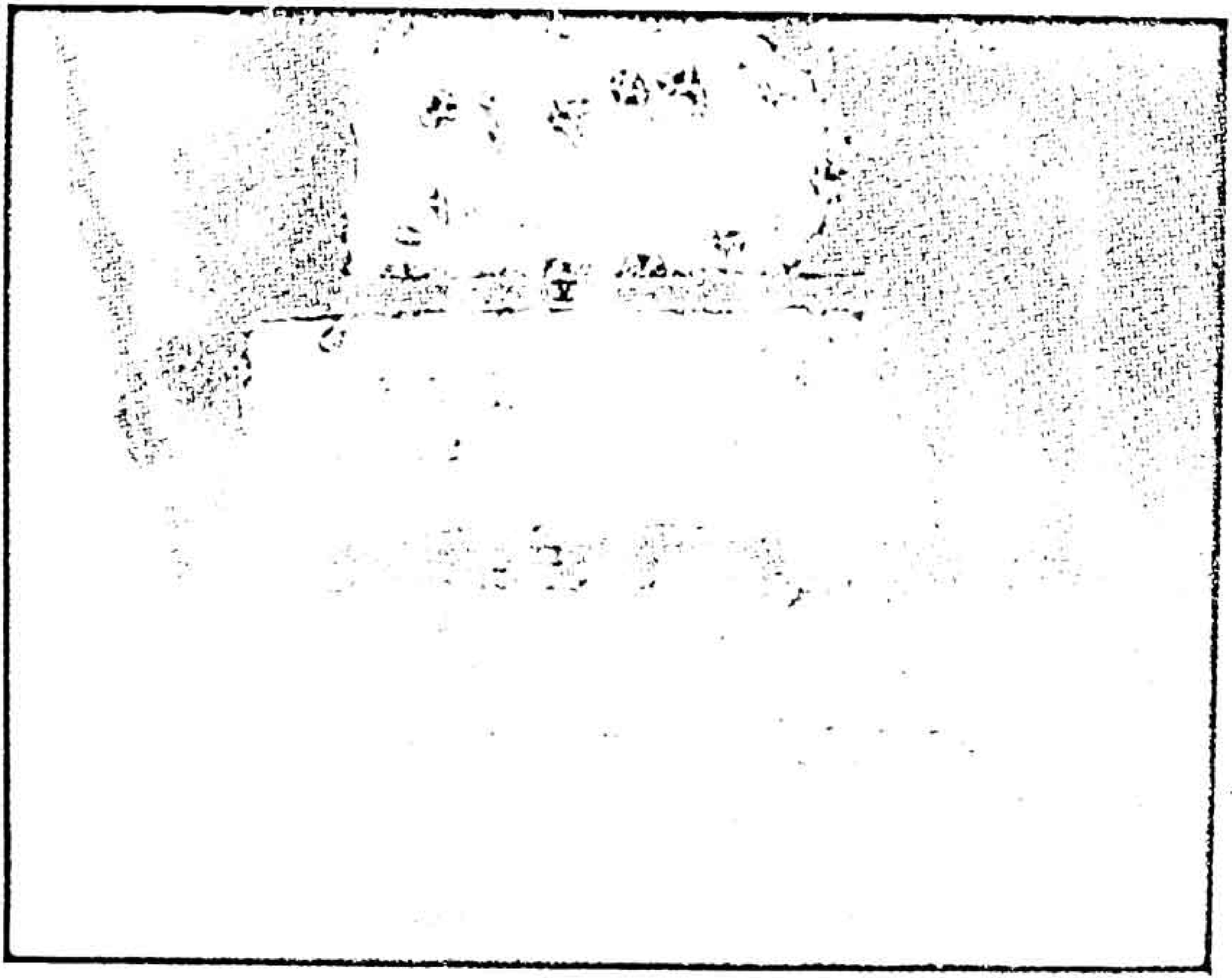
"The *adhiṣṭhāṉam* donated as a vow by the dealer in gold at Karu-ūr."

V. The fifth inscription reads:

Ka ṟa ṟa ka [ko] ḷa E y [i]
ma ṉa ṟ u[8]

The fifth letter of the first line is not clear. It looks like a badly shaped *ñai*. It may also be read as *tai*. Evidently it is *ko*. Treating the letter *ka* before it as a pure consonant *k* the word becomes *k-koḷ* according to the rules of *sandhi*. There is a horizontal line to the right at the top of the middle arm of *ya*, the last letter in the same line. The letter should be either *ya* or *yi*, the upward stroke of which is damaged and not clear. Very likely it is the latter. At the bottom of this letter there is a vertical line with a dot to its left in the middle. It may be read as either *i* or *ra*. Probably it stands for the word *Eyiṉar or Eyiṉi*.

8. 344 of 1927-28.



Plate—25. **Pugaḷiyūr**

The first word has to be amended as *koṟṟa* meaning 'belonging to the king' or brave or courageous.

The word in the second line is to be read as *maṉṟu*. meaning a hall.

VI. The sixth label reads:

...ṇa ṇa vā ṇa ṇa ka [ka ṉa]
...[ve] nā ṭā ... a ṭi ṭa ṭā ṉa ma[9]

It may be restored in Drāviḍi as:

...ṇṇa vāṇṇakkaṉ
...[ve] nā ṭā ... atiṭṭāṉam

This record mentions the *adhiṣṭhāṉam* made or caused to be made by a certain person. Evidently the word vaṇṇakkaṉ which means a coin-tester denotes the person's status or profession. It is worth noting in this connection that another label found at the same place mentions *poṉ-vaṇikaṉ*, the gold merchant.

At the right side of this photograph are seen the letters of another label arranged in three rows.

They read:

P [ō]
Ka ṉa
Ma

This evidently forms the left or opening side of another label the right side of which has been broken and lost.

VII. The seventh label may be transcribed as follows

Nā ḷa ḷa pa ū ra pi ṭa na tai ma [ka] ṉa
Ki ra ṉa ko ṟa ṟa ṉa[10]

In Drāviḍi the record may be read as

Nāḷaḷapa ūr Piṭantai makaṉ
Kiran koṟṟaṉ

9. 345 of 1928-29.
10. 346 of 1927-28.

The latter part of the record would mean Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉ son of *Piṭantai*. Evidently the word *Piṭantai* is a compound made up of *Piṭaṉ* and *tantai* (just like *Āntai*). Then the record would mean the holy person *Piṭaṉ* (*Bhaṭāra*).

It is not possible to take Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉ as Koṟṟaṉ son of Kīraṉ as in such a case it should be Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉ. The word *makaṉ* preceding Kīraṉ Koṟṟaṉ shows that Kīraṉ was the name of a single unit, a person.

The first portion ending with *ūr* evidently represents the name of a place, to which the donor belonged.

VIII. The eighth label[11] reads as follows:

Ṇa ka ṉa ma ka ṉa pe ru ṉa ki ra ṉa

The three letters of *na* (3rd, 6th and 12th) as also *ṉa* (9th letter) have to be read as basic or pure consonants.

The record will be

Ṇākan makaṉ Peruṉkiraṉ[12]

i.e. Peruṅkīraṉ, son of Ṇākan.

According to Tamil grammar, words do not begin with *ṇa* as the initial letter. But this occurs in Prākṛt where dental *ṇa* is changed into *ṉa*. Thus it may be seen that this label unmistakably shows the influence of Prākṛt.

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11. 347 of 1927-28.

12. In the photograph of the inscription there appears to be some sign between the sixth and seventh letters, and it would be possible to take it as (·/·) i.e., i. Traces of a stroke to the right are seen at the bottom of the tenth letter, thus making it appear as *Ku*. Then the latter portion may be read as :

I ḷa [ru] ṅ ku ra ṉ

But the name does not make any sense.

KUṈṞAKKUḌI

Kuṉṟakkuḍi, more popularly known as Kuṉṉakuḍi is a small village in the Tiruppattur taluk of the Ramanathapuram district, and lies at a distance of about five miles from the Karaikkudi town. The place obviously derives its name from the hill (*kuṉṟu*) which is in the middle of the village. At the top of the hill is a temple dedicated to God Subrahmaṇya. There are three rock-cut temples excavated at the foot of the hill for God Siva who is facing south. One of them is used as a strong room for the preservation of the valuables of God Subrahmanya at the place. The second shrine is dedicated to God Macilēśvara as mentioned in a Vaṭṭeḻuttu record at the place, and the third to Malaikkoḻundīśvara. The walls of the cave temples contain a number of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sculptures, as also more than twenty inscriptions of the later Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya periods.

On the western side of the Subrahmaṇya temple on the rock is a natural cavern or rock-cut shelter. The area under the boulder has been converted into a building with several compartments and occupied by mendicant beggars, who call it *Jñāṉiyarmaḍam*. In it are set up the figures of a Naga, Hanumān, and a seated image, which they call Jñāṉiyār. The whole cavern space under the boulder bears close resemblance to similar ones found in some of the Tamil districts, particularly Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tiruchirapalli and must have contained a number of stone beds with pillows which appear to have been used by the Buddhist, Jain and Ājīvika ascetics, who retired to such places for pious meditation and religious exercise far away from the noice and bustle of inhabited areas. Near the cavern in the boulder at Kuṉṟakkuḍi is a rock-cut well which must have supplied water to the residents in the cavern.

A Brāhmī inscription is found engraved on the inner side of the brow of the rock overhanging the cavern. It was copied and noticed by Venkoba Rao in the Epigraphy Report,

Madras, for 1909.[1] The inscription however does not appear to have been read and interpreted so far. Even the three scholars Krishna Sastri, Subrahmanya Ayyar and Narayana Rao, who have worked on the Brāhmī inscriptions of the Tamil country, have not taken it up for study, though they have studied those that were collected by the Epigraphy Department even after 1909. Apparently this is due to the peculiar manner in which the inscription has been incised on the overhanging brow.

This is a short record consisting of only eleven letters. It is written not only upside down but also in the reverse form. As one stands on the floor and sees the writing on the overhanging brow he finds that the top portion of the letters is at the bottom while their base is at the top. Further the letters are incised reverse as found in the matrix of a seal and the record has therefore to be read only with the help of a mirror.

All the letters in the inscription, except the third one which is damaged, are clear. The inscription reads :

U pi [ū] ra a ta ṉa ca ta ta ṉa

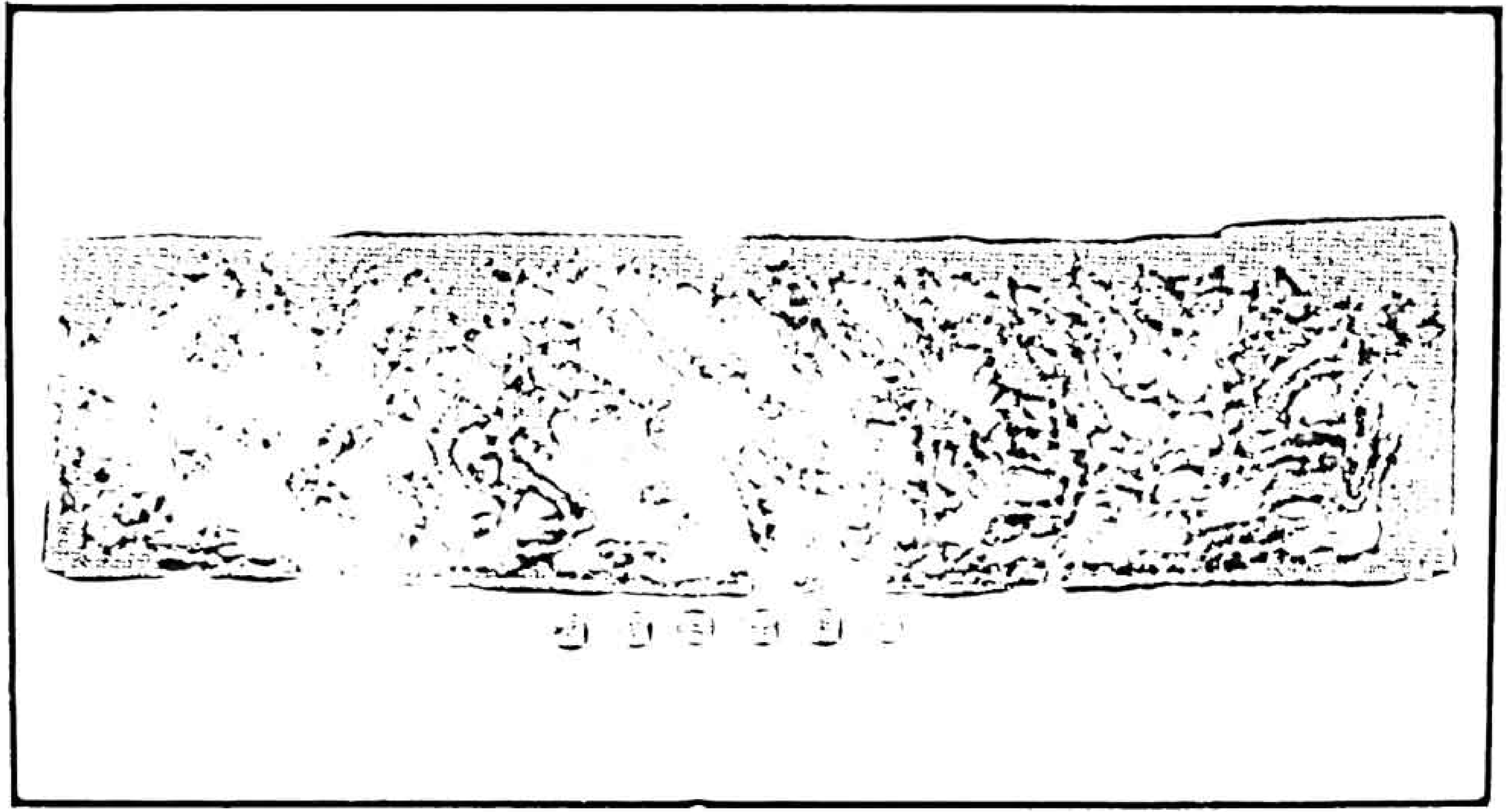
Following the principle followed by Dr. Būhler while editing the inscriptions in the Brāhmī script recovered from Bhaṭṭiprōlu one has to treat as basic consonants the two *na's*, the first of the two *ta's* and the *ra* in the Kuṉṟakkuḍi inscription and read it as

U pi [ū] ra Ataṉ Cattaṉ

Upiūr is obviously the name of the place. The word *Ataṉ* looks very similar to the word *Ātaṉ* one meets with in early classical literature. It has been suggested that the word *Ataṉ* or *Ātaṉ* is derived from the Sanskrit word āpta which is a synonym for *arhat*, the Supreme Lord. The word *arhat* is found in use not only among the Jainas but also among the Buddhists and Ājīvikas. From the Tamil poem *Nīlakēśi* it is learnt that the word *āpta* was used by the Ājīvikas to denote exclusively the founder of the religion (Makkhali gōśala) Maṟkali.[2] Even in a late Kannaḍa inscription of the thirteenth century A.D. from

1. 44 of 1909 ; Rep., pt. ii, para 6 ; 1910. pt. ii, para 5.

2. vv. 670, 671, 683 etc. (A. Chakravarti's Edn.)

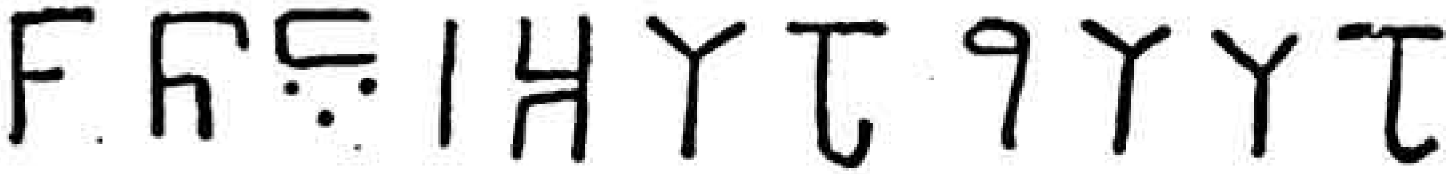


Plate—26. Kuṉṉakkuḍi

Śravaṇa Beḷgoḷa the word *apta* is used; and it is obviously a reference to the holy men among the Ājīvikas.[3] Therefore, the word *Atan̲* or *Ātan̲* is derived from the word *apta* and obviously means a holy person belonging to the Ājīvika faith. Cattan̲ is probably the name of a person.

Thus the inscription would mean the holy person Cattan̲ of Upiūr. Possibly he was the resident of the cavern.

The record as one sees it from the ground



Reverse form

Correct form

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3. See A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, pp. 79, 125, 244 and 276.

MĀMAṆḌŪR

Māmaṇḍūr in the North Arcot District is a village seven miles from Kāñcīpuram and lies to the west of the river Pālar. The place is already well-known for the rock inscription in Sanskrit of the Pallava King Mahēndravarman I and for the series of four rock-cut temples excavated at the foot of the low range of hills about half a mile to the west of the village and assignable to his time. A natural cavern which lies about a furlong to the north of the caves half-way up the hillock, is formed by two boulders one reclining over the other, thus providing some shelter underneath. A thin and shallow drip-line is cut on the over-hanging rock to take off the rain water. This would indicate that the cavern should have originally been used as a human habitation.

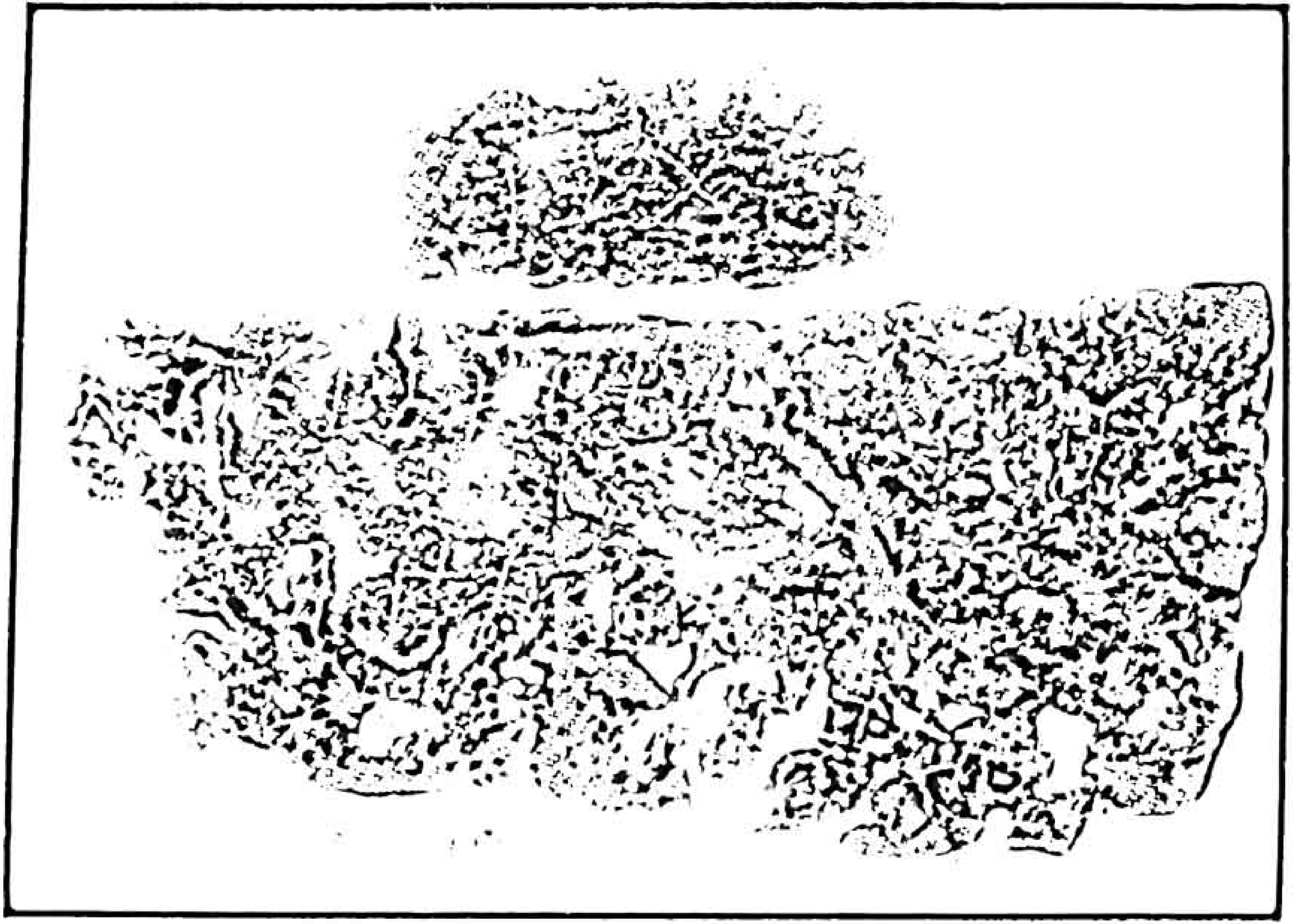
Kāñcīpuram was a flourishing Buddhist centre in the early centuries of the Christian era, and it is possible that the cavern at Māmaṇḍūr could have served as a place of retreat for itinerant Buddhist monks as their winter resort. As said above, similar caverns with or without inscriptions, have also been discovered in the districts of Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Madurai and Coimbatore and some of them at least were probably Buddhist in origin. Further north, in the Tiruchirappalli and South Arcot districts also early vestiges of this faith have been found. The one in Mālakoṇḍa in the Nellore District has been noticed above.[1] The present cavern at Māmaṇḍūr is therefore of interest as furnishing another evidence of the existence of early religious retreats, which appear to have been formed in many districts of South India in the early centuries of the Christian era.

On the brow of this boulder is found engraved an inscription[2] in four short lines in early Brāhmi characters.

The inscription appears to be couched in the early Tamil language and states that the cavern was the gift made by some chief (*kōṉ*) whose name, however, is not clear and who is stated to have given Toṟūr. The mason's name is given as Calāvaṉ.

1. 531 of 1937-38.

2. 171 of 1939-40 ; Report for 1939-40 to 1942-43pt. ii, para 1.



Plate—27. Māmaṇḍūr

The inscription reads :

ka ṇa mā ṭo
to ṟū ṟa ta na ta ko na ku na [ṟa......ma ci]
ce yi ta ṇa ta ca ṇa ca lā
va ṇa

The second line contains the expression *Toṟūrtanta kōṉ*. The word *tanta* has been used in classical literature in the sense of having 'captured' and 'given away as to among equals.' A Pāṇḍya king whose poems are found both in the *Puṟam* and *Aham* of the Śangam classics is named *Ollaiyūr tanta Pūta-p-Paṇḍiyaṉ*. It is possible that the word *tanta* means 'having captured and then given away' in the same way as the word *vaḷangiya* is used in the inscriptions of Māṟavarmaṉ Sundara Pāṇḍya I.

The person who actually had the cavern modelled is called *tacaṇ Calāvaṇ*. The word *tacaṇ* should be used with the *c* doubled. But only a single *ca* is found here.

The name *Calāvaṇ* would be equal to *Calātōr* i.e. an ignoble person as opposed to Caṇṟōr. It has the same meaning as the words *Avinīta* or *Durvinīta*, later on borne by the Western Gaṅga kings. Such names appear to have been borne only by the Jainas. Evidently the architect here was a Jaina.

Tōṟu means a herd of cattle.

The first letter of the first line read as *ka* has a tail at the bottom, turned towards the left. Similar forms occur in the Bhaṭṭiprolu records, where it has been read as *ṣa*. But that value does not suit here. Further the letter *ṣa* has not been found anywhere else in these inscriptions.

The inscription may be read in Drāviḍi as *Kaṇmāṭo Toṟūr tanta kōṇ kuṇ (ṟa ma ci) ce yi taṉ taccan Calāvaṇ* and translated as

"This was gifted by the chief *kuṇ [ṟa maci]* who gave *kaṇ māṭo Toṟūr*. Mason Calāvaṇ did it."

ARACCALŪR

Araccalūr is a village in the Erode Taluk of the Coimbatore District and lies in the Erode-Kangayam road. It is about twelve miles from the Erode town. There is a low lying hill called the Nāgamalai, near the village which contains a natural cavern at a height of about sixty feet from the surrounding area. It is locally called *Āṇḍippārai*. In this are found three beds with inscriptions. They were reported in the newspapers as having been found by some interested scholars among whom were Sri M. Raju, Seeri Venkataswami and Sri Pal. I visited the cavern with my colleagues in 1962 and took impressions and photographs of the inscriptions.

Of the three inscriptions one is highly damaged and only a few letters here and there are visible in it. The second consists of five lines each having five letters. It appears to contain vowelled consonants of the letter *ṭ*, like *ṭa, ṭā, ṭi, ṭu, ṭai,* etc. Both the inscriptions seem to be later in date when compared with the third one in Brāhmī characters in two lines.

This find at Araccalūr in the Kongu country lying about thirty miles to the west of Pugaḷūr is perhaps at the western limit of the area from which such labels have been recovered so far.

The present label inscription like many others in the Tamil country is in the Tamil language as may be seen from the use in three places of the Dravidian *ṉa* which is like an inverted J. But compared with other similar labels it presents some new forms of letters.

The opening symbol i.e. the first letter of the first line is a circle with a dot inside. This indicates *tha* in the Brāhmī script. This is not found anywhere else and it cannot also be the initial letter of the record. It may therfore be taken to represent a word like *mangaḷa* or *siddham*. Even though the word *siddham* is represented by symbols at the beginning of inscriptions yet they are not uniform. There are many forms, though all of

them have been uniformly read as *siddham*. Some of them are in the form of a spiral like @, which is probably a later development or evolution of the present from a circle with dot inside.

The second letter is a *ta* with a curious super script in the shape of a box at its top. But the box has apparently no connection with similar boxes found at the top of each letter in the variety of the script known as the 'box-headed' commonly used in the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, as these two are separated by intervals of time and distance. It cannot also be taken as a ligature or *dvandvakṣara*, as it does not make any sense, and as such forms are not found anywhere else in the Tamil area. The box slightly appears to be incomplete. Very likely it represents the symbol for the medial vowel *I* long. It may be noted in this connection that the symbol for medial *I* short is largely found in the other Brāhmi labels, while the symbol for the long one is not found anywhere. Thus the letter has to be read as *tI*.

The second and third letters in the second line are shaped like the (English) Roman letter Z. These are preceded by the letter *va* and succeeded by two symbols for the letter *ka* (double *ka*) followed by the symbol for the Dravidian *ṉa* which is the suffix for the third person masculine singular nominative, thus indicating the name or epithet of a person. Of the two successive forms of this letter as well as of the succeeding *ka*, the first one should represent the pure vowel, and the succeeding one the vowelled consonant with the inherent *a*. The only letter in Brahmī closely approximating the symbol is *ṇa*, two horizontal bars with a straight vertical line, connecting the two in the middle I. Only the vertical line is here slanting almost connecting the right end of the top horizontal line with the right end of the lower line. This form is evidently an evolution of the original form obviously necessitated for writing the letter in a simple stroke without lifting the hand or stylus. Then the word can be read as *Vaṇṇakkaṉ*.

Almost the same form is found in the seventh letter of the first line, and here also the same value has to be applied to it. The letter immediately preceding it is a *pa* with the right arm fully drawn downward and a hooklike stroke opening downwards

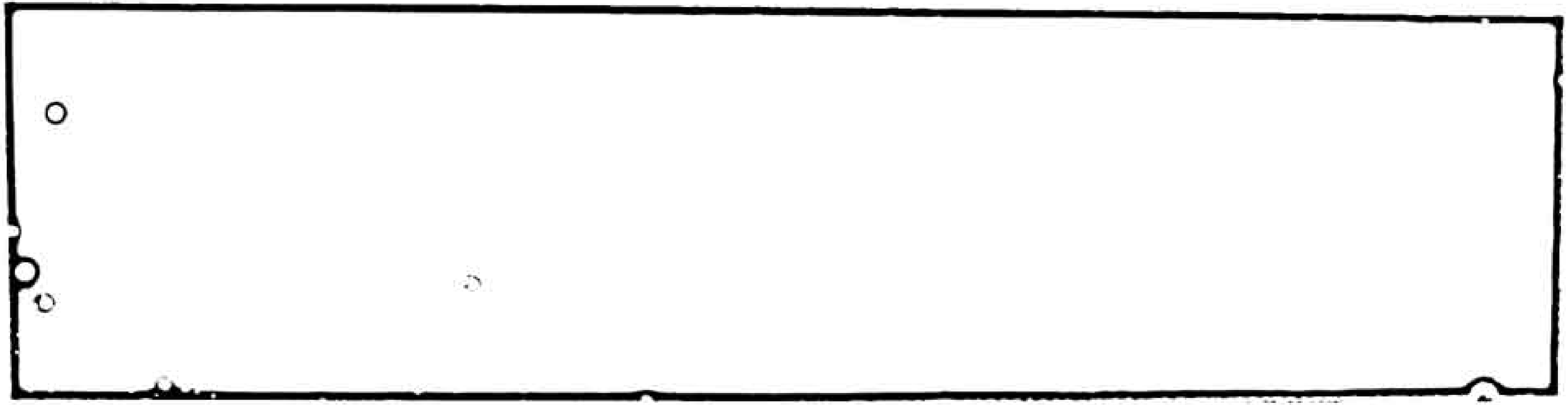
added to its right. Thus it becomes *pū*. This letter also is not found in the other labels.

Of the three succeeding letters in the first line, the first one is *mā*. The cross bar is not fully drawn so as to connect both the arms; but it stops in the middle, while it is projected to the right so as to make it appear as the symbol of the medial vowel *a* long. It may be noted that traces of a similar projection is also seen in the fifth letter, where it has to be read only as *ma*, with the inherent *a* short. But here the projection is pronounced and it has been read tentatively as *mā* with the medial vowel *a* long.

The next letter is peculiar. The two horizontal strokes at the top to the left of the vertical line indicate that they represent the medial vowel *ai*. But the main letter is unusual. It does not resemble any Brāhmī form. The only nearest approach to it is the form of the Dravidian *ṟa*, found in similar labels, with the lower limb of the form not clear. The stone appears to be damaged here, peeling off portions of the lower part.

The last letter of the first line is a tripartite *ya*. It is interesting to note that all the three horizontal lines in the letter have each a serif or *talaikkaṭṭu* in the form of a small circle. In fact this *talaikkaṭṭu* is found in some other letters also e.g., *mā* and *ta* (ninth letter in the first line) as also on the penultimate letter and the one previous to it in the second line. But it is pronounced here.

It remains for us to consider the last seven letters of the second line. The first letter *te* and the last letter *na* are clear. The middle five present difficulties. In the second letter the lower part is damaged. It can be either *va* or *ca*. It does not resemble the first letter of the second line which has been read as *vā*. The third letter can be read as *nā* (long). But the addition of the symbol vowel *a* long is found in the middle of the stem and not at the right of the overhanging hook as in other isnscriptions. The only letter to which medial vowel *ā* long is added as found herein is *ta*. But the projection of the base to the left does not make it a *ṭā* unless we take it as a natural defect in the stone which it does not appear to be. This letter can be read



Plate—28. Áraccalūr

as *ti*. But there appears to be a small circle or *talaikkaṭṭu* at the top of the verticle line, thus making it a part of the letter and not of the medial vowel added. Such a form in Brāhmi will be *ḍa* or *da*; and this letter has not been met with anywhere in similar labels. Probably it may be *ca*. The next letter resembles *ra* or *ta*. There is a résemblance of the line being doubled, though we are not sure. The lower part is damaged. The sixth letter appears to be a badly formed *ta*. After the second beginning of the line there is a small dot. It is not, however, clear whether it indicates the *puḷḷi* or *virāma*.

The reading of the label may now be as follows:

Siddhama [*] Ti ta ta ma pū ṅa ta ta ta na m [a] [r] ai ya Va ṇa ṇa ka ka na te va nā ca tta n.

The label may be restored as follows: *Siddham* (by symbol). *Tittam pūṇa tattan Maraiya Vaṇṇakkan Tevaṉ Cattaṉ.*

Palaeographically comparing this label inscription with the other ones so far recovered it may be assigned to a period later than the Pugaḷūr label and thus dated to the third or fourth century of the Christian era.[1]

1. The inscription has been noticed in the *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* for 1961-62 p. 10 also. The tentative reading given in it is as follows:—

   1. *Eḻuttu Pipuṇar(u)ttāṉ Māḷlai;y*
   2. *Vaṇṇakkaṉ (Teva)ṉ (Chātta)ṉ*

   The Brāhmi characters employed here are apparently more advanced than those in which the cave inscriptinos at Pugaḷūr (Karur Taluk) and Eḷaḍippaṭṭam at S'ittappavaśal (Kulattur Taluk), both in the Tiruchirappalli District, the Arikamedu (near Pondicherry) graffiti etc., are written. The present epigraph must therefore be assigned to a date later than that to which the other epigraphs are attributed. Some of the letters of this inscription are note worthy for their special forms. For instance the very first letter *e* has been rarely met with in early Brahmi epigraph (A. R. Ep., 1906, No 457) from Aṇaimalai, Madurai District, a letter very similiar in form to that of our epigraph is met with. Among the early Brāhmi epigraphs from the north it is only in the Kalsi edict of Aśoka that a somewhat similar sign is employed for this initial vowel, (*Indian Palaeographical Charts*, by G. Bühler, Table No. II, Line 7, coloum No. III). The medial *ū*

Let us now proceed to understand what the label purports to tell :—

The word *tittam* may be restored as *tirttam* which is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit work *tirtha*, supplying the pure consonant *r*. Such elision of *r* is very common in Tamil inscriptions, e.g., the word *Durggai* (SK. *Durgā*) is generally found written in inscriptions as (Tukkai) Duggai without the pure consonant *r*. The word *tirtham* means ceremonial purity, 'Holiness' and indicates also the Jaina *āgamas*.

The word *pūṇa* means to 'put on', 'to wear' to undertake, etc. Then the expression *ti* (*r) *ttam pūṇa* may be translated as "(in order) to undertake austerities to attain purity or holiness."

The next word is *tattān*. This is the verb which indicates the act of giving away or bestowing. The word should be *taṉtāṉ*

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sign seen in the letter ḻu is also peculiar as also the medial sign taken to represent the vowel *ai* in the letter *lai*. The form of the letter *ka* with its horizontal line showing a tendency to curve downwards indicates its development from its simpler earlier forms. The other interesting letters met with here for the first time are *ṉa* and *cha*. As for the language, the presence of the letter representing the sound ḻa and the manner of doubling the consonants by repeating the same letter twice as for instance in vaṇṇakkaṉ (line 2) point to the fact that it is Tamil. Further, from its tentative reading given above it may be observed that the language of the record is not mixed with Prakṛt words as in the case of the other early Brāhmi epigraphs from southern India. This inscription is therefore very important as it may be said to be the EARLIEST TAMIL EPIGRAPH known so far. Though, owing to the archaic nature of the language employed in it, the meaning of the inscription cannot be satisfactorily made out, yet it may be construed that a person whose name is probably Tavaṉ Chāttaṉ put the letters together (*e*) *ḻuttu* [*p*] *uṇar* (u)*விசு*).

and not *tattaṉ* as found in the inscription. According to the rules of *sandhi* in Tamil grammar the initial *ta* in the word *tantaṉ* should be doubled when it follows the word Pūṇa *puṇattantan*. Then this may be read as *puṇat-tataṇ* with the intervening *n* dropped. But this does not seem to be the intended version as in that case the important letter *n* is dropped out and as such doublings of consonants necessitated by the rules of *sandhi* are very often ignord. The word *tantaṉ* is derived from root *tā*. According to the *Tolkāppiyam*, the three words *ī*, *tā*, *koḍu* all mean the same thing. 'to give away'; but each of the three words should be used according to the status of the giver and the receiver. The use of the word *I* indicates the receiver in lower status, the word *tā* that both the receiver and the giver are of equal status while the word *koḍu* shows that the receiver occupies a higher status.

I ta koḍu eṉak kiḷakkum mūṉṟum iraviṉ kiḷavi āgu iḍaṉ uḍaiya avaṟṟuḷ.

'ī eṉ kiḷavi iḻittoṉ kūṟṟa

'tā' eṉ kiḷavi oppōṉ kūṟṟi

'koḍu' eṉ kiḷavi uyarttōṉ kūṟṟē[1]

This is best illustrated by the epithet *paṉṉāḍu tanta Pāṇḍiyaṉ* given to the king who had the classical anthology of the *Naṟṟiṇai* indicating that the Pāṇḍya conquered the country or territory known by the name of Paṉṉāḍu and gave it back to the king from whom he captured it, in which transaction both the parties were of the same status, both being kings. But in the case of the present inscription it could not have been that the giver and the receiver were of equal standing. The receiver should have been an ascetic of some religious order and the gift was intended for his undertaking some religious austerities. Thus he was a person who was to be respected and venerated by the ordinary people. As such the use of the word *tattaṉ* may not be appropriate for the occasion. It may also be noted here that in

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1. *Tolkāppiyam Sol*; *Eccaviyal*, 48-51.

similar labels found elsewhere only words derived from the word *koḍu* like *kuḍuppitta (kuḍupita)* are used. Perhaps the form *tattan* found here is connected with the Sanskrit word *datta* with the suffix *ana* added.

The next word is *maṟaiya*. This is evidently the adjective of the next word Vaṇṇakkan, appearing in the next line. Names like Vaḍama Vaṇṇakkan Dāmōdaran, Vaḍama Vaṇṇakkan Peruñcāttan are found borne by poets whose verses are included in the anthologies known as the Śangam classics, where the word *vaḍama* meaning 'northerner' indicated the place of their origin. Similarly the term Māraiya should here indicate the place of origin or residence of the donor. It would mean one belonging to Māṟai which occurs as the name of a territorial divisions in the Tamil literature of the medieval period. Probably that is the shortened form of Māranāḍu mentioned in the *Tañcaivāṇan Kōvai*.[2]

The next word is Vaṇṇakkan. It means a 'tester of coins.'[3]

The last word contains seven letters, not all of which are easy to decipher. They may be conjecturally taken as *Te va na ca ta ta na* and read as *Tēvan cattan.*

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2. If the first letter is taken as *ma*, the word will be *maraiya* and this can be interpreted in two ways: (a) To take the last letter as a pure consonant, a superfluous one found sometimes at the end of words ending with the medial *ai* i.e., *maraiy*. This practice was found in the early medieval period i.e, eighth to tenth centuries. It is very doubtful if it was prevailing at such an early period as the date of the label inscription under study. Then it will become an object meaning a hiding place or secret place. It is not known if the caverns were known by that name. Then it involves syntactical difficulties. It is very unusual to find the object mentioned after the verb. If it is to be normal it should be *tantamarai*. Even then the mention of the donor after that is not correct. (b) The other way is to take the word *maraiya* as an adjective to Vaṇṇakkan. If it is connected with *marai* meaning the Vedas, thus, indicating a Brahmana, then the correct form would be *maraiyon* as a nominative and not as an adjective. Either way the reading cannot be interpreted.

Evidently the word is connected with the Sanskrit *varnaka* which may also be construed as one connected with the colours. The word Vannakammar indicates a painter of colour.

The label may be translated as follows:

"Success (this bed) was given for (the purpose of) undertaking austerities to attain holiness or purity by Tēvan cāttan, a tester of coins and a native of Maṟanāḍu."

The person or persons to whom this gift was made has not been stated in this record.[4] The last four letters may perhaps be tried to be read as *tīrtaṉ*. But there is one difficulty in such reading. The word *tīrtha* would bring immediately to one's mind the tīrthankaras of the Jainas, and as the word also indicates the Jaina *āgamas* it will be tempting to take this as a gift to the Jaina ascetics. But there are difficulties in such an interpretation. The Jainas do not appear to have used the word *tīrtha* in the sense in which it has been used in this label. The tenor of the language would suggest that the austerities so undertaken would lead to the position of the attainment of the *tīrtha* or *tīrthankara*. The Jainas hold the number of Tīrthankara as twenty four and no addition can be made to it. Thus this is quite against their belief.

The symbol used for *siddham* at the beginning of the label is also to be considered. In the Tantric and astrological works, this symbol of a circle with a dot inside represents the sun. This symbol is used all the world over. In astrological works the sun is the principal planet around whom the other planets may be said to move. The Ājīvikas were experts in astrology and other modes of prognastication foretelling the future. In fact their sacred books are said to consist of *ubhayamārgam* and *aṣṭamahānimittam*. The latter consists of the books on the science of prognastication. There are also many references in literature to their practising the

4. The word *Tīrthahāra* is used among the Vaiṣṇavas of South India and indicates a holy person. References are made to them in the hymns of the Āḻvārs.

art of astrology which moves round the sun. As such it may be considered that the gift was intended for the recluses of the Ājīvika sect.[5]

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5. This paper was originally published in the Silver Jubilee Volume of the *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*. It has now been published in a slightly revised form in the light of further study of the inscription.

SOME INSCRIPTIONS OF THE EARLY CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA

The epigraphical records of the Tamil country after the period of the Brāhmī labels discussed above become available only from the commencement of the seventh century A.D. The intervening period may be treated as a comparatively 'dark period' in the epigraphical field as in many other aspects in the history of the Tamil country. There are only a few streaks of light flashed by some stray records which can be definitely attributed to this period and found in this part of the country.

Three varieties of script are found used in the inscriptions recovered in the Tamil country and assignable to the period commencing from the seventh century A.D. They are (i) the Grantha script employed for writing the Sanskrit portion and the Sanskrit letters occurring in the Tamil portion of the records, (ii) the Tamil script, also referred to as Grantha.—Tamil used for writing the Tamil records in the northern part of the country by the Pallavas and their successors the Cōḷas and (iii) the Vaṭṭeḻuttu script used for writing in the southern part of the country, viz., the Pāṇḍya territory and the adjacent areas till their final conquest and annexation to the Cōḷa empire in the eleventh century A.D. It is to be noted in this connection that in writing words of Tamil origin occurring in the Sanskrit portions of the records only the Grantha or the Grantha—Tamil is used, while the Vaṭṭeḻuttu script is employed in Writing the Tamil portion in such inscriptions.

All these three varieties of scripts are derived from the Brāhmī. The particulars as to when and how these varieties separated from the parental Brāhmī and evolved as independent scripts are not known. But if a surmise is possible the evolution may be traced with the help of the few inscriptions of the intervening period. They are the Tirunāthar kunru epitaph and the labels on the rock at Tiruchirapalli. Fortunately the labels at the latter place are found recorded in all the three varieties.

The earliest of these[1] is a short record of four lines containing in all twenty-nine characters. It is found engraved on a rock at Tirunāthar-kunru near Tirunaruṅkonrai in the Jinji Taluk, South Arcot District. It reads

ai m pa t te ḷ = a ṉ = a
ca ṉa n no ṟ ṟa
ca n ti ra na ṅ ti a
ci ri ka r ni ci ti kai

Aimpattel = aṉaśaṉan noṟṟa Candira—
Nandi āsirikar niśīdikai.

The *niśīdikai* of Candra-Nandi Ācārya who (died), having observed the fast (not taking food) for fifty-seven days. Another inscription assignable to a period earlier than the seventh century A.D. has also been recorded at the same place. So far it has not been possible to state definitely whether this record is to be treated as written in the Tamil or Vaṭṭeḷuttu script. Gopinatha Rao included this under both the varieties. Very likely the two scripts had not become separate ones then. But some letters in the record clearly exhibit Vaṭṭeḷuttu forms. The letter *ai* is of the trident variety, already noticed in the Brāhmī lables at Aḻagarmalai.[2] It occurs only in the Vaṭṭeḷuttu while the form of this vowel in the Tamil script was derived from the Brāhmī form of a triangle, with a horizontal stroke to the left at the top (¬>). The form of *ṇa* of this record is the same in the Vaṭṭeḷuttu and is also found in the Brāhmī labels from Pugaḷiyūr, while the form in the Tamil script is different. The letter *ma* has a flourish at the right in which the end of the line forming the loop is extended, just as in the Vaṭṭeḷuttu form which peculiarity is not found in the Tamil script. The symbol for the medial vowel *e* in the letter *te* and for the medial *o* in the letter *no* are also of the type found in the Vaṭṭeḷuttu and in the Tamil script. This record should therefore be considered the earliest in the Vaṭṭeḷuttu variety.

1. *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy*, No. 239 of 1904., *S.I.I.*, Vol. XVII, No. 262 and plate facing p. 1. An eye copy of the record is published by T.A. Gopinatha Rao in the *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, p. 231.

2. See ante, pp. 237-38.

The date of the record presents another knotty problem. The earliest datable records in this variety of the script are the Madras Museum plates[3] and the Vêḷvikkuḍi plates[4] on copper and the Tirupparaṅkunṟam inscription on stone of the time of the Pāṇḍya king Parāntaka Neḍuñjaḍaiyan in the latter half of the eighth century A.D. Considering the Vaṭṭeḷuttu form of the letters in these records as well as the changes found in the evolution of the Grantha script and the form of the Brāhmī script of the inscription examined above, the Tirunātharkunṟu inscription may be taken as belonging to the fourth century A.D.[4]

In the cavern in the rock at Tiruchirapalli, described above, a few of the stone pillars of the beds show traces of obliterated writing which have been assigned palaeographically to the fifth century A,D. One of these is said to contain the letter *cira*. Evidently the name Cirāppaḷḷi or Tiruccirāpaḷḷi owes its origin to this label.[5]

On the ledge of the rock leading to the cavern there is a label of four characters deeply cut and repeated at least in four places.[6] This has been read as *Kaṁṭṭuhu*, evidently meant for *Kaṁṭṭugu* and interpreted as a Sanskritised Telugu word meaning 'enemy,' suggesting 'that like many other similar titles of Mahēndra. varman, this may also have been his *biruda*'. But the reading *Kaṁṭṭuhu* does not seem to be acceptable (sustainable), both palaeographically and etymologically[7]. If the script in which the

3. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XX, p. 57 and plate.
4. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol XVII, p. 291 ff.
5. "At Trichinopoly which was visited during the year, some interesting discoveries were made. Its ancient name as found in the hymn of Jñānasambandha in the *Dēvaram* is Chirāp-paḷḷi and the same occurs also in the long verse inscription of about the 11th century A.D., engraved in the Pallava cave on the hill. This name was in vogue for several centuries in inscriptions as well as in literature, until the time of the Vijayanagar rulers, in a few of whose records, however, the incorrect form 'Tiruchchirāppalli' was sometimes used and this has given rise to the modern anglicised name 'Trichinopoly'. Though the word *paḷḷi* has several meanings it appears to have in this case of special reference to its association with the Jaina and Buddhist religion, ancient vestiges of which have been found here." (*ARE.*, 1937-8, pt. II, para 3, p. 78).
7. It also appears to have been incised in a fifth place, where only the two last letters are now visible.

label has been incised is taken as Grantha then the reading should be either *Kaṭamṭuhu* or *Kaṁṭaṭuhu* according to the place assigned to the *anusvāra*. In the early records of South India as also in those of North India, the *anusvāra* is written over or on the top of the previous letter. Thus in the Uruvapalli plates of Pallava Yuvamahārāja Viṣṇugopa the word *jitam*[8] is written with the *anusvāra* dot on the letter *ta*. But this has been subsequently changed to the top of the succeeding letter, evidently treating it as the pure consonant *m*, thus making it appear more as a ligature. Not realising this some mistakes have been committed by earlier epigraphists, eg. the name Mangiyuvarāja, viz., Mangiyuvarāja of the Eastern Cālukya dynasty has been read as Maginduvarāja and the name of the place in the Pulimtura plates of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin Mādhavavarman has been read as Pulibūmra.[9] It is the latter practice that appears to have been followed in writing the labels at Tiruchirapalli. This will become clear from the label *Amithananda* discussed later. It may also be mentioned here, that to avoid this confusion in the later grants of the Pallavas the *anusvāra* is found written not on the top of the letters, but as a small circle independently in the proper place, next to the previous letter.[10]

The formation of the first letter *ka* and of the symbols of the medial *u* attached to the letter *ṭu* and the contention that the label has been written in the Grantha script. In the Grantha of the period the vertical stroke of *ka* is doubled either completely or at least in the lower portion. But it is only a single stroke and not a doubled one. Similarly the symbol for the medial *u* usually found in the Grantha script of the period is a vertical stroke at the bottom of the character, also doubled in most cases. But here the mark to denote the medial vowel is in the shape of a crescent. The fourth and last character which has been read as *hu* and taken to represent the *visarga* (*h*) is not seen written in this form anywhere. The hook-like curve on the left at the beginning of this letter is not found for the letter *ha* in any other

8. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. V, p. 50.

9. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIX, p. 258.

10. Vide in the Kaśākkuḍi plates of Nandivarman Pallavamalla II (*South Indian Inscriptions*, Vol. II, Plate XI).

record of the period.[11] We do not also know of any other instance where the *visargu* has been writteen as *hu*. The dot on the second letter has been taken as an *anusvāra*. In Sanskrit as also in Telugu, the hard consonant occurring after an *anusvāra* is not doubled. Again when consonants are doubled it is usual to have both the aspirated and unaspirated ones and not of the same variety as found here. Under the circumstance it is difficult to treat the record as having been written in the Grantha script.

The label is to be taken as written in the Tamil script, and in the Tamil language, and read as *Kaṭṭuṇā* taking the dot on the second letter as indicating the pure consonant according to the rules of the Tamil grammar *Tolkāppiyam* referred to earlier.[12]

The word is made up of *Kaṭṭu* + *uṇ* + ā negative, and may be interpreted as 'one who is not bound ; or who has transgressed the bond (of attachment)'. cf. *Kaṭṭuṇḍāṇ* 'one who has been bound'; '*Kaṭṭuṇṇi*' 'one who suffers himself to be bound.' Thus the term *Kaṭṭuṇā* is something like *vītarāga* and indicates one who is free from the bonds of worldly attachment.[13]

As mentioned earlier, this label is found engraved in four different places, along the precipitous approach to the cavern. In three places, a different label in early script is also engraved faintly below the word, while the fourth has a similar label inscribed above the word. One such[14] is *Kaiyviḷakku*. It is to be noted that as in the previous label here also the letters *ya* and *ka* (second and fifth characters) have dots on them to denote that they are pure consonants. The addition of a superfluous *y* after *kai* is a peculiarity met with sometimes in the Tamil inscriptions

11. Especially Nos 137, 138 and 140 of 1938.

12. See ante., p. 121.

13. The word *Kaṭṭu* also means control or regulation and thus may be taken as indicating 'one who is not bound by regulations.'. We know that Pallava Mahēndravarman took pride in assuming such titles. If so it is possible that *Kaṭṭuṇā* is one of his titles in pure Tamil. We know some of his titles like *Citrākārapuli* (tiger among artists), *Kuṟṟambu* etc. though sounding like Tamil are really mixed with Sanskrit and Telugu. The term *Kaṭṭuṇā* would appears to be the first title of Mahēndravarman in pure Tamil.

14. No. 138 of 1937-38.

of the period. The word *kaiyviḷakku* means hand lamp or *karadīpam* which at once brings to our mind the word *Dīpankara* found in the Buddhist literature as the name of one of the Bodhisattvas. Dīpānkara is considered as the patron deity of sea-farers and it is said that in times of distress, and when they are lost in the sea, *Dīpankara* will appear to them with light and guide them to safety. Thus the label may be taken as meaning the torch or becon leading a person to eternal bliss. Evidently it denoted the name of a teacher.

The above two are the Tamil labels inscribed on the rock in the Tamil script.

Another[15] Of the labels inscribed below the word *Kaṭṭuṇa* is written in the Grantha script and has been read as *gatadoṣa*. The photograph of the impression shows above the last character *sa* a little to the right a dot which may be taken as indicating the final *m*. Thus the label would read *gatadoṣam* in Prākṛt and evidently stands for *gatadoṣam* in Sanskrit, which should properly be *gatadoṣah*. The final *m* in the word is most probably due to the influence of the Tamil language, and is not the *visarga(ḥ)* required for a Sanskrit work. The term, would mean one whose fault or sin has gone i.e. a pure soul. The word *doṣa* also means night or darkness; and as such it is possible to take the term as indicating 'one who has dispelled darkness and though brought light.'[16]

The third label[17] also in the Grantha script has been read as *Amitānanda*. The third letter which has been read as *ta* does not have the loop and looks more like *tha*. Thus the label has to be read as *Amithananda*. Evidently this also is in prākṛt and stands for the Sanskrit form *Amithyananda* made up of the two words *amithya* and *ānanda* with the long letter *ā* shortened as *a*.

15. No. 138 of 1937-38.

16. The early Kadama king Kṛṣṇavarman II is known to have the title Doṣarāśi. In his Kirukuppaṭūr grant (line 7) he is called Doṣarāśi-rāgāṅkitaḥ (R. S. Panchamukhi, *Digest of the Annual Report on Kannada Research in Bombay Presidency for the year 1940-41, p.4*; In his Bennur plates he is called Doṣarāśivarma, (*Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. V. Intron., p. III and BI 245).

17. No. 137 of 1937-38.

The word *mitha* is the Prākṛt form of the Sanskrit *mithya*, meaning falsehood, illusion. The term would then mean the Bliss of Disillusion or the Bliss that is not false. Very likely this also was the name of some person.

The fourth label,[18] consisting of three letters, written above the term *Kaṭṭuṉa* is also in the Grantha script and has been read as *pra[yu]lai*. The middle one is very peculiar and the last one may be read as *le*. As at present, the reading of this label cannot be explained. Above it are seen portions of a diagram having some squares intended for playing some sedantic game like the chess.

In one place on the rock leading to the cavern is inscribed a label[19] in Grantha script which has been read as *Tamcara[ka]*. Krishnamacharlu writes about it as follows:[20]

"The word *Tamchahara[ka]* can be interpreted as a title of Mahēndravarman and to mean 'he who captured *Tañcha* (Tanjore).' From the Vēḷūrpāḷaiyam plates we know that Simhaviṣṇu, the father of Mahēndravarman, claimed to have conquered the Chōḷas; and in support of this fact it may be pointed out that Kañjaṉūr in the Tanjore District bore the surname Simhavishnuchatur—vēdimangalam in the Chōḷa times (No. 265 of 1907), testifying to its connection with the king of this name. As Pallava influence began to be felt in the Chōḷa country only from this period, it is possible that Mahēndravarman who may have participated in this southern expedition in the company of his father had adopted this title."

This appears to be reading too much from the label. The last letter which has been read tentatively as *ka* has a loop or circle at the bottom and as such it is definitely not possible to read it as *ka*. It looks more like *ta* or *tha*. At the beginning before the letter *ta* there are traces of another letter which may be read either as *ta* or *tha*. The letter which has been read as *ca* looks more like *dha* and the *anusvāra* is indicated by a dot above. After the letter *ha*, two dots, one above the other, are

18. No. 133 of 1937-38

19. No. 135 of 1937-38.

20. *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy*, 1937-38, pt. ii, p. 79.

seen placed, thus indicating the *visarga ḥ*. If these dots are ignored, then the space between *ha* and the following one, which has been read as *ra* will be disproportionate to what we find for the others. Thus the whole label will read :

bha or *ta ta ṁ dha ha ḥ ra ta*

bhatamdha haḥrata or *tataṁdha haḥrata.*

Is it possible to take the label as *Bhadanta Har(i) ta* i.e. the venerable *Harata* or *Harita* ?[21] And it is also doubtful whether the method of replacing the nasals with the *anusvara* was in use at that early period and in this part of the country. As such it would be better to refrain from any attempt to interpret this label at this stage and leave it as it is.

In another place, we have a label[22] Written in the Vaṭṭeḻuttu script reading *Ceṉatanṯaṉ*. The same label is found engraved again close by. Of these two labels, one is written in a single line while the other is written in two lines. Faint traces of a dot on the second letter *na* can be seen in the photograph of the impression. If that forms part of the inscription, then the label would be *Ceṉtanṯaṉ* (*S'ēṉatanḍaṉ* or *S'eṉtanḍaṉ*). The suffix of third person singular masculine *aṉ* indicates that the label represents the name or title of a male person.[23] The labels

21. Even supposing that the label reads *Tamcaharaka* i.e. the capturer of Tanjāvūr, then it would indicate only Simhaviṣṇu who is really credited with the victory and not his son Mahēndravarman who is not associated with the victory in any place.

22. No. 136 of 1937-38.

23. The term *Ceṉatanṯan* is made up of two words, *ceṉa+tanṯaṉ*. The first word *ceṉa* is evidently the Sanskrit word *Seṇa* and the second *daṇḍa*. Both mean army. *Seṇa* will become either *Ceṉa* or *Ceṉai* in Tamil. On the other hand we know that *Ceṉaṉ* was used as a title of some Jains ; c.f.

(Sambandar, *Tiruvālanay padikam*). Appar who was the head of the monastery of Pāṭalipuram before his reconversion to S'aivism was known then as Dharmasēna. If the word in this label is intended as a title like that, it will come only as a suffix, and not as a profix as is found in the label. The other word *daṇḍa* means a staff as well as obeisance. Sanyasis used to carry staff. The Vaiṣṇavas were known as *tridaṇḍins* and Smārtas *ekadaṇḍins*. The word Markarin also indicates one who carries a staff, *daṇḍin*. Probably the word is equal to *daṇḍin* or Markarin.

Plate—29. Tirunātharkuṉṟu

evidently contain the names of the religious ascetics who were probably living there professing a religion different from the Vedic, either the Buddhist or Jain or the Ājīvika religion.

Palaeographically these inscriptions may be assigned to the seventh century A.D. The rock-cut temple for Śiva excavated in the rock and the long inscriptions in Sanskrit incised there clearly show that Mahēndravarman took a special interest in the place and in the excavation of the Śiva temple there. If so it is doubtful if teachers of other religions inimical to Saivism would have found it possible to have their abode in the same rock and very near the temple. They should have been there earlier, and these labels also should have been incised earlier. They may be assigned to the sixth century A.D.

We have referred to earlier the traces of obliterated writing on some of the pillows in the cavern. One of them which is fairly well-preserved reads *namostu*.[24] The Grantha characters in which this label is written appear old and the script has been assigned to the fifth century A.D.

Thus we have the following records after the time of the Brāhmī inscriptions discussed above before we come to the inscriptions in the Tamil country which became available from the beginning of the seventh century A.D.

Grantha script:	One label of the fifth century A.D and four labels of the sixth century A.D. all at Tiruchirappalli.
Tamil script:	Two labels, of which one is repeated in four other places, all at Tiruchirappalli and assigned to the sixth century A.D.
Vaṭṭeḻuttu:	One epitaph of the fourth century A.D. at Tirunātharkunṟu and the other (seventh century) at Tiruchirapalli written twice.

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24. No. 13: of 1937-38.

THE BRAHMI INSCRIPTION AT MĀLAKOṆḌA

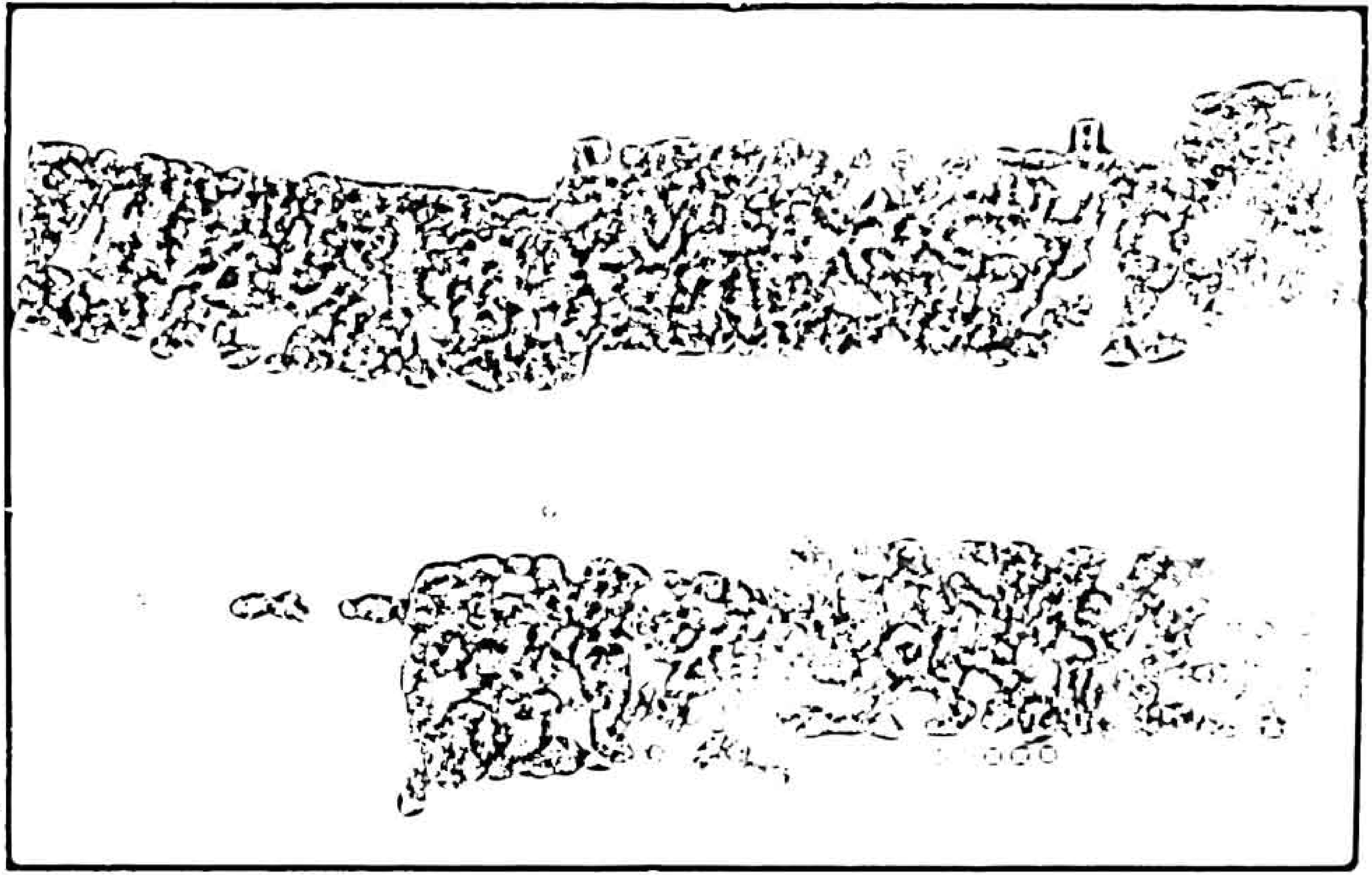
The Mālakoṇḍa hill in the Kandukur Taluk of the Nellore District contains an early inscription in the Brāhmī characters attributable to the third century B.C. The record is engraved on the brow of a projecting boulder of rock on the hill. The overhanging rock forms a large natural cavern below it. It is now called the *Pārvatī-guha*. It must have been occupied by Jaina or Buddhist monks. Though Jaina and Buddhist vestiges of a later date have been found in the Chingleput, North Arcot and South Arcot Districts, the discovery of this cavern with an inscription of the third century B.C. is of considerable value for the student of the early history of Jainism and Buddhism in the area. It has been seen that similar caverns have been found in the Tiruchirapalli, Madurai and Tirunelveli Districts.

The inscription[1] which is somewhat damaged appears to be in the Prākṛt language and registers the gift made by a certain Siri Vīri-Seṭhi, son of Nanda-Seṭhi of the *Aruvā [ḷa] kula*. The gift was apparently the cavern over which it is engraved. The *Seṭhi* donor mentioned above probably provided the cavern with the drip-ledge and slightly smoothened out the rough walls of the cavern and provided other amenities, so as to make it fit for occupation.

The epithet, *[Aruvā (ha* or *ḷa)] – Kulasa* i.e. who belonged to the *Aruvā [ḷa] kula* applied to the donor is of interest. Probably it is connected with the *Aruvā-nāḍu or Aruvā-vaḍatalai* (the northern section of *Aruvā*) applied to the tract of land

1. No. 531 of 1937-38. See *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy* 1937-38. Part II, Para 1.

It has been suggested that the Aruvāḷar are called the *Aruvāhiḷa kula*, that this cave was made for the S'ramaṇas and that the Aruvāḷar were S'rāmaṇas in ancient times (Mayilai Seeni Venkatasami, *Samaṇamum Tamiḻum* (First Part), p. 39. Thougt it is probable that the cave was intended for the Śramaṇas, it may not be possible to say that the Aruvāḷars were all S'ramaṇas.



Plate—30. Mālakoṇḍa

[illegible]

around Kāñcī and to the north of it up to Nellore and which is supposed to correspond to the country inhabited in the second century A.D., according to the Greek geographer Ptolemy, by the tribe named by him as *Aruvarnoi*. Evidently this formed the origin for the term '*Aruvar*' applied to the Tamils by the Telugu people.

Text:

A ru vā [ḷa or *ha] ku la sa Na ṁ da*

Se ṭhi pu ta sa Si ri Vi ri

Se ṭhi [na or *no] da na.*

The inscription may be translated as:

Gift by Siri Viri Seṭhi, son of Nanda Seṭhi of the *Aruvāḷa* (*ha*) *Kula*.

APPENDIX III

INSCRIBED POTSHERDS FROM ALAGARAI AND URAIYUR

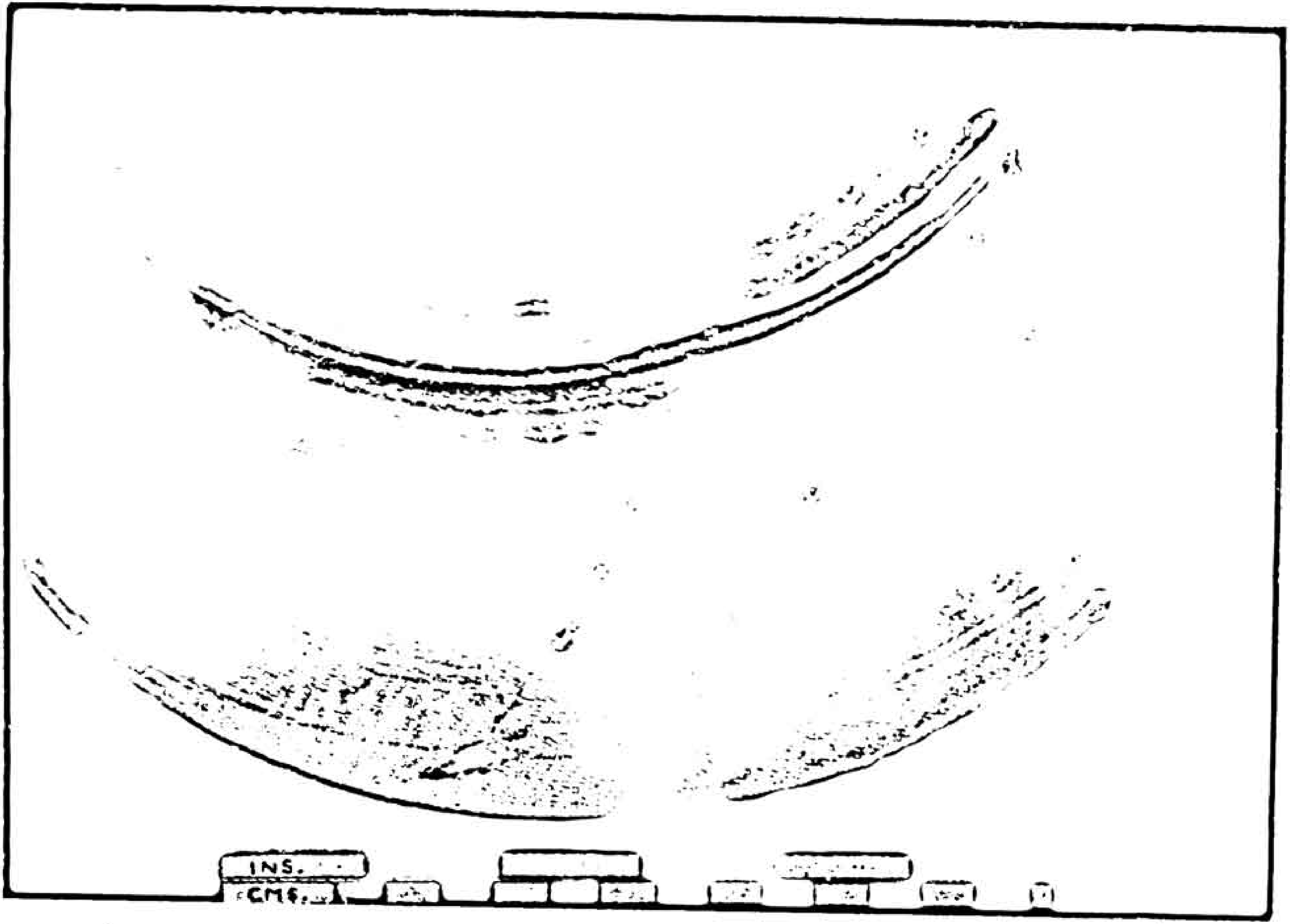
Besides the caverns which contain a number of inscriptions in the Brāhmī script in South India mentioned in the foregoing pages, there have been found a number of potsherds with such inscriptions in the course of archaeological excavations conducted at a few places in the Tamil country. The first among such sites is Arikamedu near Pondicherry where the excavations conducted by Mortimer Wheeler in 1944 yielded as many as eighteen potsherds with Brāhmī inscriptions. They have been already deciphered and published.[1] The excavations conducted by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology of the University of Madras recently at Alagarai (1964) and at Uraiyur (1965 and 1966) have yielded a number of potsherds with inscriptions in the Drāviḍi Brāhmī script. Two potsherds were found at Alagarai and fiive with clearly inscriptions at Uraiyur.

As in the case of the Brāhmī inscriptions found in the caverns, the language of these potsherd inscriptions is also Tamil. From the levels from which they have been got, the other finds unearthed along with them and the palaeography of these inscriptions, they may probably be assigned to the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century A.D. The inscriptions are written on a pottery which is usually called the black-and-red ware and assigned to a period roughly from the first century B.C. to the fourth or fifth century A.D. as gleaned from the excavations at these sites. They are found at comparatively low levels in the trenches suggesting that they belong to a fairly early period. Besides, the letters found in some of the inscriptions such as *a*, *ka*, *ma*, *ta* and *pu* closely resemble the letters of the Arikamedu potsherd inscriptions and therefore these inscriptions may be assigned roughly to the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century A.D. as the Arikamedu ones.

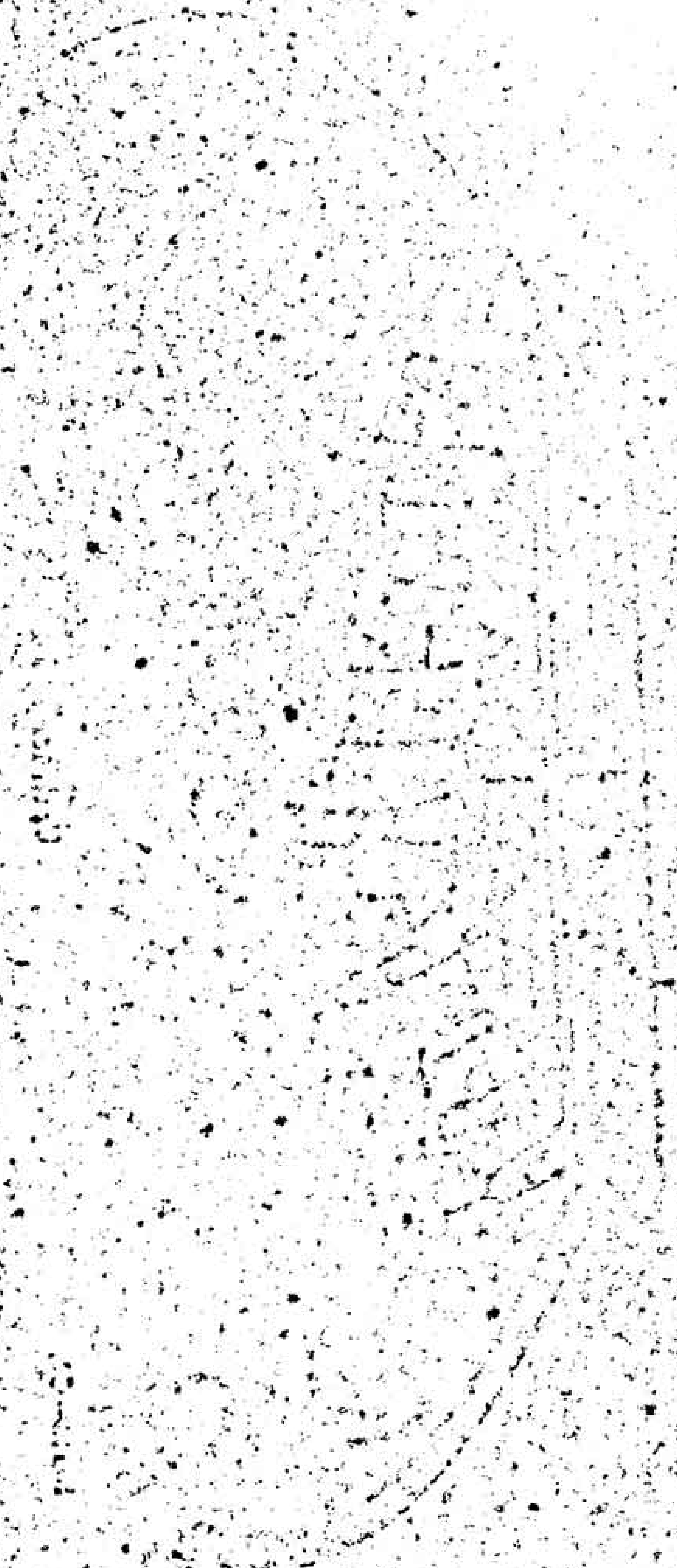
The two potsherd inscriptions from Alagarai read as follows:

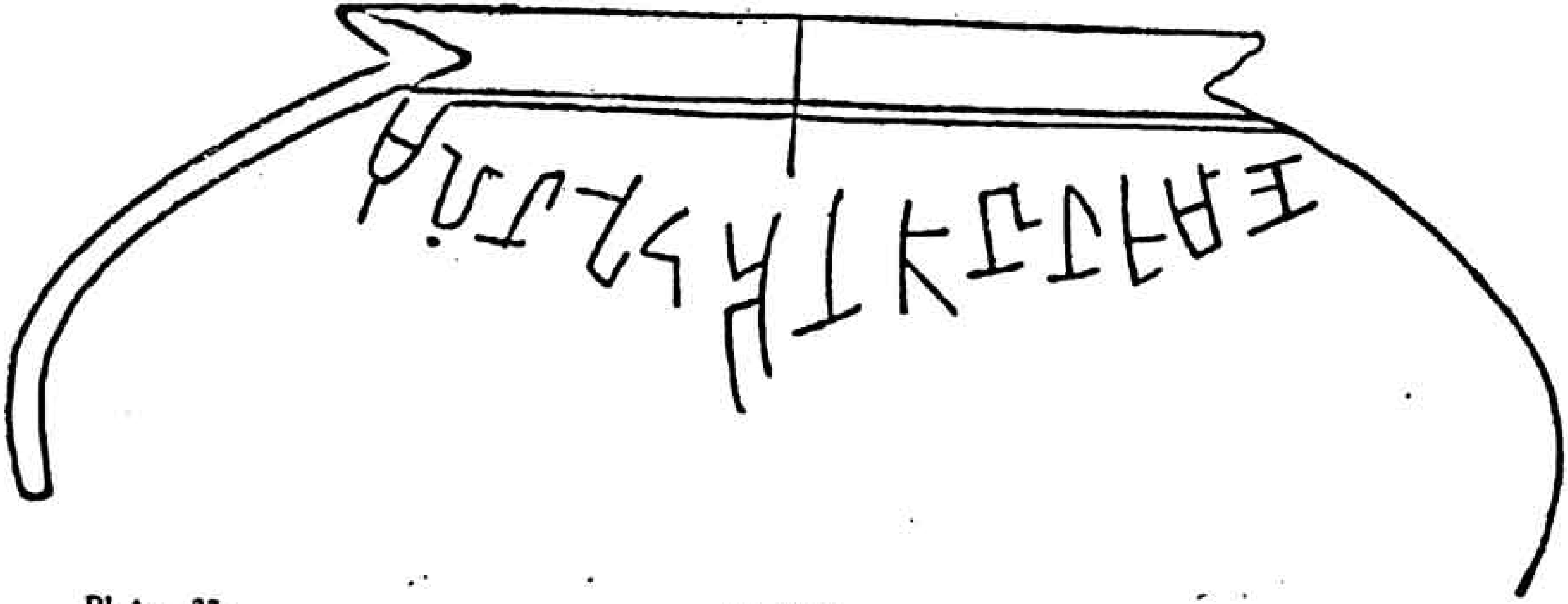
The first one contains three letters namely *kū ta ta*. The potsherd is a broken piece and the last letter *ta* in it is at the very end of the piece. Therefore it is an incomplete inscription and

1. *Ancient India*, No. 2, pp. 109-14. See also P. Z. Pattabiramin, *Leo Fowlles d' Arikamedu*, pp. 33-34; K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Journal of the University of Madras*, Vol. XIV, No. I.



Plate—31. Uralyur





Plate—32. Uṛaiyūr

by supplying the word *ṉ* the inscription may be read as *kūttaṉ*, which in Tamil means dancer. The second inscription which is well carved contains only one letter and reads *ka*.

The most important of the potsherd inscriptions got in the course of the excavations at Uraiyur is written below the rim portion of a big pot which is unfortunately broken and contains thirteen letters on the whole. The length of each letter is about ¾ of an inch and the first ten letters of the inscription can be easily read as *mū la ṉa pē ḍu a na tā ṉa na*. It is then followed by three more letters, the reading of which is little difficult. The first among them looks very much like *rā* or *ū* the second *ma* and the third *ṉai*. Thus it may read as *rāmaṉai* or *ūmaṉai*. Obviously it refers to one *Antānan* of *Mūlanpēḍu*. But the real interpretation of the whole inscription is difficult on account of the broken nature of the sherd in which the last letter itself is not seen fully.

Another inscription which is engraved on a second potsherd contains four letters clearly incised which may be read as :

pū ṉā ka ṉa.

The last three letters *ṉā ka* and *ṉa* are obviously a suffix to a name. Since during the early centuries of the Christian era the Nagas were one of the important tribal people who lived in the area and the names of some of the Śangam poets end with the suffix *nākaṉ*, the word *nākaṉ* may be taken as a suffix to a name. *Pū* stands for the name of the person or it is the last letter in his name.

The next potsherd contains eight letters including the first letter which is broken. The other seven letters are *ka ta a ṉa a ra ī*. One interesting thing about this inscription is that of the seven letters the first, second, fourth and the sixth are vowelless consonants namely *k, t, n, r* followed respectively by the vowels *a, a, ā* and ī. If each of the vowels is added to the previous vowelless consonant we get the word *katanārī*. Though the inscription is fairly clear, it is difficult to interpret it because of its incomplete nature.

The next potsherd contains three letters *a rai ca*, the old form of *araśa* or *araiya* meaning chief, lord, king etc.[2]

The last inscription reads *ka li ṉē*. It is incomplete and therefore difficult to interpret.

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2. *Arośa* is the same as *Araiya* meaning a chief, lord, king etc., found in a number of early inscriptions of South India; See *S.I.I.* XII Nos. 15, 16 and 60.

APPENDIX IV

LIST OF TAMIL BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS

S. No.	Name of find Place	Taluk	District	Inscription Number as in Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy or Indian Epigraphy	Remarks
1.	Aḻagarmalai	Melur	Madurai	70 to 79 of 1910	...
2.	Araccalūr	Erode	Coimbatore	280 of 1961–62	Impression and photograph of the inscription were taken by the author himself in 1962.
3.	Ariṭṭāpaṭṭi (Māṅguḷam)	Madurai	Madurai	460, 461 to 465 of 1906	...
4.	Āṉaimalai	Madurai	Madurai	457 of 1906	...
5.	Karuṅgāḷakkuḍi	Melur	Madurai	561 of 1911	...
6.	Kīḻavaḷavu	Melur	Madurai	135 of 1903	Some letters cut upside down.
7.	Kongarpuḷiyankuḷam	Tirumangalam	Madurai	55 to 57 of 1910	...
8.	Kuṉṉakkuḍi	Tiruppattur	Ramanathapuram	44 of 1909	Incised upside down and in the reverse form.
9.	Māmaṇḍūr	Ceyyar	North Arcot	171 of 1939–40	...
10.	Marugaḷtalai	Tirunelveli	Tirunelveli	407 of 1906	...
11.	Muttupaṭṭi	Madurai	Madurai	58, 59, 60 of 1910	...
12.	Pugaḻiyūr	Karur	Tiruchirapalli	341 to 347 and 349 of 1927–28	...

13.	Siddharmalai (Mēṭṭupaṭṭi)	Nilakkottai	Madurai	45 of 1908	...
14.	Sittaṉṉavāśal	Tirumayam	Tiruchirapalli	388 A of 1914	...
15.	Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam	Madurai	Madurai	333 of 1908 ; 140 to 142 of 1951–52	...
16.	Varicciyūr	Madurai	Madurai	38 A to C of 1908	...
17.	Vikkiramangalam	Tirumangalam	Madurai	621 to 623 of 1926	...

Find Places of Pot-sherds with Tamil-Brahmi Inscriptions

18.	Alagarai	Musiri	Tiruchirapalli		This site was excavated in 1964 by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras.
19.	Arikamēḍu	Pondicherry State	...	Ancient India; No. 2, pp. 109-14	...
20.	Uraiyur	Tiruchirapalli	Tiruchirapalli	..	Three seasons of excavations were conducted at this place in 1965, 1966 & 1967 by the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras.

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